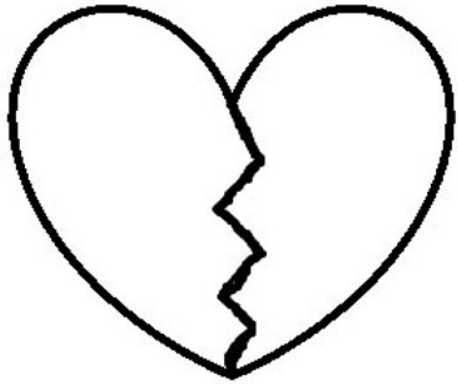

Mune Shinri

Revised Updated Text

By Samantha Rinne Hooker

Mune Shinri: Revised Updated Text
Samantha Rinne Hooker
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Part 1: Teachings

This text is written as a melding of the beliefs of Shintoism, Christianity, and Taoism. The words of this book are subject to change by its author. There is no one Mune Shinri, but rather each person is writer of their *own* Mune Shinri (or "heart truth") just as each person has their own religion or worldview. This is *my* Mune Shinri. You may make yours by writing in the spaces on each page. This is a minor update, mainly to reorder.

Evil Genius

Before we get to specific teachings, let's clear something up. Much of the effort certain groups who dislike religion's effect on the world is spent on disproving the existence of God, or something of the sort. Why? Fear of the unknown, fear of death, or fear of control. This is fine too, the primary rule of this religion is religious acceptance. If this were not so, we have a cult, and having accidentally gotten into a cult for two days, I hate cults. Still, I would defend the opposite. Suppose someone is trying to convince you that the universe exists. And, outside of Reality, all that would exist is the white blankness of nonexistence. With me so far? Now, while you could possibly prove that Reality does not exist and probably the one you're dreaming in infinite regression, someone is fooling you. That someone might be God, yourself, some rational scientific creation origin, or something freakish like Cthulhu, that isn't the real issue. The fact is, the deception or what we call "reality", (and even if it's not real, this doesn't change the argument) exists as evidence of the deceiver, what we call a "Creator" or "God". Or in simple terms, a clay pot cannot be made without someone gathering clay, and firing the kiln. Even if you automate it with a machine, someone had to build the machine. That, would be my logical proof for religion. Because from here, you can believe in anything, including a purely scientific Creator. God is a Cause, not merely a Being. Also, it is important that you understand that God is not evil. God produces good and bad fortune, but the overall effect if for your long-term growth. Other thought on this is false belief.

Revision

Years have passed since I first wrote this book, and many of my beliefs have changed. The world around me has changed too. Aside from debate against atheism, the biggest beef that I have of any religion is with Islam. Although there are obvious criticism, the real problem is that the book itself practices a doctrine called abrogation, which boils down to throwing out old text. While believing in abrogation, the Quran as tries to pass itself off as the infallible word of God. These two are mutually exclusive, to say nothing of the fact that declaring anything as infallible within the confines of religion is incredibly destructive.

The Mune Shinri is my personal beliefs, and they have developed over time, but I reject abrogation. For this reason, I leave both versions around.

I believe that religion means to “reconnect” and that no, God did not tell me anything from a burning bush, but it would be a poor example to teach violence, control, or abuse. I will not hate anything, but I will reject secular or religious groups that govern by force.

One Hundred and Eight

In every printed edition of this text, I have made the work come out to 108 pages. This is intentional. There are 108 earthly temptations that the soul must overcome in order to attain freedom from the karmic cycle. This book is to teach neither moralism nor wickedness, but to help a soul decide for itself the best way to be free.

On Thoreau

Jack London is portrayed as some great outdoorsman, but he died in a country cottage of alcoholism. Thoreau acted like he was living outside civilization, but actually was supported by his friends in town, and was a massive hypocrite. I myself live with my folks, and short of hand copying versions of books, it is unlikely that most writers can really exist on true outskirts. This is not, therefore, a sort of “be a rugged individualist” nonsense, but a basic concept of that perhaps one day, things will become bad and people will need traditional values, and learn to hunt, fish, and live outdoors. This book is to encourage people to actually try to learn useful skills, and to be able to make decisions for oneself.

Section 1: Theory of the World

Lesson I-Being

Beings were forged out of five major elements; Fire forged them from God's essence,Water hardened the forge, Earth gave them substance, Wood gave them unique soul from the Creator, Wind gave them air to breathe. We were made in God's five natures, given faith, trained in the knowledge of good and evil, thus we show our praises. In addition, each of us was given a God- spirit with the power to do miracles. God is both God and Force, it is the Soul or Heart of a person, and it is Nature. How do common objects exist without design? The life of Light is dedicating oneself to work or to selfless acts; the life of Dark is enjoying the pleasures of life or self- knowledge. The True Life is neither, it is spending one's moments in the company of others solely to be in the company of others.

Lesson II- Cosmos

All major religions are essentially the same. The purpose of religion is to “reconnect.” If the follower fails in this, it is their failing, but if the teachings themselves fail, the religion is a cult. What is believed is personal, but it is the choice to believe which is important. All faiths should believe in loving others as though loving themselves. I believe a God controls the Gogyou (five elements), and well as the forces of Light and Dark. In addition, I recognize angels of heaven and spirits of earth. There may also be Reapers and powerful human agencies which guide the world behind the scenes.

I feel God is created in our image, both Male and Female; therefore, He may become She whenever He wants. He was not created, but She birthed herself. That is why He endures throughout all time. I trust God created Heaven and Earth out of formless Nothing, and thus it is our mission to create, to love, and to preserve those creations we treasure.We are You. The world you perceive as part of reality is a mirror of your own strengths and insecurities. Live life as you would want it, not according to guilt.

Lesson III- Nature

Nature does its work in such a way that it is adequate in itself, and yet gradual. People try to improve nature, and have yet to find a way. Master life first, then you will understand why this is so.

Science is not inherently evil, there is evil in using science to destroy nature. Find the reason nature persists, and devote your life to keeping it in balance with the progress of the age. There are two types of nature, your nature and the nature of the world. Delight yourself with both. Walk in the forest, and study your own self.

Lesson IV- Nonviolence

It would be a mistake to say that violence is okay. This was the failing of Islam, the founder decided that for criticizing his faith, he wanted his followers to be able to kill others. While I have learned from life that absolute nonviolence is possibly unrealistic, I do not condone violence and will not excuse any potential followers saying that I said it was okay. Neither do I believe in gun control.

There are those such as soldiers and police who carry weapons, who defend the nation we live in, just as civilians need to be able to carry weapons to defend from a nation which has become corrupt, or to defend against murderers and thugs.

I say, defend, however. There are those who rationalize defense as invading another country. This is nonsense. The purpose of learning to use a weapon is to defend ones own life or keep safe loved ones such as mother or father, spouse, or pets from those that seek to harm, and will not stop until someone is dead. But given the choice, it is more appropriate to exhaust debate, nonlethal force to subdue, and outer defenses such as walls first. There are also means to deflect harm, such as judo. Ultimately, I cannot stop another from using violence if they feel their life is in danger or it is their job to protect others, but it is important to remember the expression, “Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world.” This by the way is not a Muslim expression, it's Jewish. Violence is like karate as spoken by Mr Miyagi. Having a situation where people are “sorta” allowed to be armed, sooner or later, you get squished. Violence is not necessary, but you must decide whether to act and what to protect.

Jesus teaches us to love our neighbors, defining a neighbor as the “one who shows mercy” and to be one to others. Jesus also teaches us to love our enemies, but love is not appeasement, for appeasement is fear, not love. It is like the distinction between appeasing a violent drunk and loving them. A person who appeases, gives the drunk more alcohol, allowing them to continue being a violent drunk, enabling them. A person who loves others, loves them enough to try to stop them.

Notice, I didn't say kill. Killing is always a last resort, when life is in danger and all other discourse and other defenses have failed. Just as you do not shoot drunks, you do not kill people for believing a certain way, but you do stop them from abusing themselves and others.

Lesson V - Balance

A life in balance is important. Many religions teach some sort of moral law or other, but in terms of values, I believe this is unhelpful. The Buddha and Lao Tzu both saw extremes in behavior, from perfect ease that comes from ruling class to poverty and suffering. Too much ease breeds decadence, too much suffering breeds desperate action. In the same way too much morality paradoxically creates people who believe they are already doomed anyway, so they act out, as surely as too little creates lawlessness. Live with principles, but remember the value of grace, that you are blessed even if you feel unworthy.

This is also true of values. If one is too extreme they risk creating assassins. If they are too much of a pacifist, it is an invitation for others to crave their land. Balance and a sensible nature are important in all things.

Lesson VI-Outcasts

Do not shun people because they do not appear to belong. Much of the Christian church's current problems are due to this. Whether they believe differently, or have different sexual natures, or any else, this is not the issue. The proper temple welcomes people, not cast them out, as they have already experienced from the world. Whatever you hate in others, you actually hate about yourself. The world you perceive, is the world that is real to you, because reality is a mirror of your own sense of worth.

Treat others with love, as they are you. Whatever you reject, you reject about yourself. All deserve acceptance and love. All deserve the right to be joined to their soulmate, male, female, or otherwise. There is no reason to treat another as strange. This is not to say people are entitled. But a person ought to be judged on their actions, not on their differences. The only thing to exclude is poor behavior. If a person rapes or kills, we do not invite them to our house. But ideally, everyone who repents of their actions is welcome.

Lesson VII- Customs

Many religions have complex customs, and indeed earlier drafts laid out everything from clothes to wear, to food to eat, to various details concerning marriage ceremonies. I have aged since previous drafts, and somehow clothing doesn't seem to matter as much, and I have come to realize that these things largely get in the way of spirituality. Worse, the world reflects your failings. Cults and evil religions impose dress codes on people, food prohibitions create zealous extremes. The only customs one should keep is their own values, not rules to subjugate others.

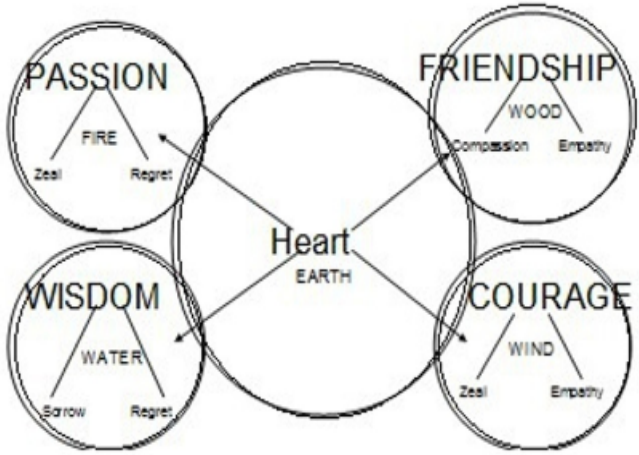
In terms of dress code, short of stark nudity (and only because in most places, it is illegal) anything is allowed. You want to crossdress? No one more than me is okay with defying gender norms. You want to wear black hooded robes? Carry around a sword everywhere? It's okay with me! If we have to make a list of forbidden things, I would say that I object to masks, bracelets/anklets, piercings, and tattoos more than other things. Masks because they are symbols of deception and resemble dog muzzles to prevent breathing or speech, bracelets because they resemble manacles, piercings because they are often attached to the noses of pigs to better grab a hold of them, and tattoos because they resemble the brands given to animals to mark their ownership. All of these things are barbaric symbols of slavery. However, if you can make a tattoo look cute, or pull off a look with some anklets or earrings, that's fine I guess. I just object to the connection to slavery. Style is about freedom, and that includes the freedom to wear cross earrings in full awareness that the cross was a sign of Roman oppression.

If someone infringes on your values, tell them politely yet firmly that this behavior is not okay with you. Above all, make your own choices.

Gogyou

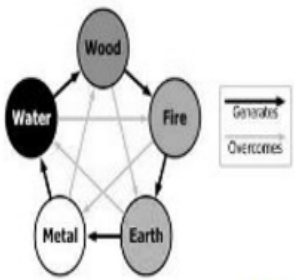
(Note: I have replaced Metal with Wind, as I feel it better suits the element's quality, and the taste are not quite correct as I felt the taste bitter better represented Wind/Metal than did Fire. This still mainly works, as when you are under the influence of Metal you do not want spicy foods as the Fire strengthens Metal)

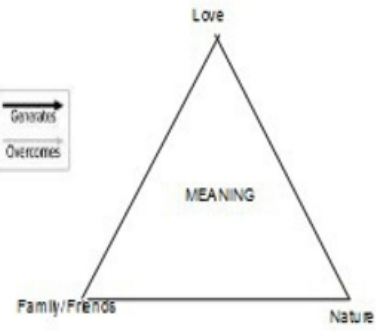
	Fire	Water	Earth	Wood	Wind
Direction	South	North	Center	East	West
Color	Red	Black	Yellow	Green	White
Taste	Spicy	Salty	Sweet	Sour	Bitter
Land	Mount	Beach	Any	Forest	Field
Emotion	Passion	Grief	Heart	Love	Courage
Season	Summer	Winter	Any	Spring	Autumn



Gogyou Traits

	Fire	Water	Earth	Wood	Wind
Strength	Action	Beauty	Stability	Spiritualism	Flexibility
Fault	Aggressive	Passive	Stubborn	Shy	Flighty
Natural Skill	Friction	Spit	Stomp	Birth	Breathe
Purpose	Create	Remove	Preserve	Adapt	Affect
Use	Warmth	Healing	Defense	Adaptation	Travel





Geomancy

To pray for weather, simply use the proper mudra (hand motion) and the same techniques as normal prayer. Certain weather is more difficult to prayer due to locality and season. Stopping a storm tends to be harder than starting it.

Fire	Sunny
Water	Rain/Snow
Earth	Stops Storms
Wood	Average Weather
Wind	Heavy Wind
Light	Thunder
Dark	Fog

To determine weather accurately, listen for a faint rumbling sound that seems more felt than heard. If the sound is above you, there will be precipitation, if it feels below you there might be an earthquake.

Fire

You strive with a fullness of energy that impresses others, but you must remember to channel your emotions properly. Will acts from personal choice.

Water

You tend to rely on more subtle pressure to get things done, but you must not meddle too much. Delicacy tends to follow orders for the praise of others.

Earth

Your peers tend to love and hate you for your consistency on issues, but they know you best for your loyalty. Duty tends to follow orders dictated by one's own soul.

Wood

You speak and act only as you deem necessary, but you often don't know how to show your true emotions and people assume you are cold and uncaring. Need acts after asking permission from others.

Wind

You strive with a randomness of energy that confuses others, but you must remember that a true individual acts as he wants even if others are doing it. Choice hears both sides first.

Light

The positive force of the Yin-Yang. This represents love of others. Use this for restoring order. This represents order rather than good, but it may exorcise demons, as possession represents chaos.

Dark

The negative force of the Yin-Yang. This represents love of self. Use this for the fluidity of dreams. Unlike most religion, Dark does not represent evil but another side of the natural world, as life and death are two sides. True evil is only that which is unnatural.

Section 2: The Temple

Name of Temples

Aiken is the name of this religion, and the name of its temple is a Traveler Welcome Home. Because this is what it is, a place where you can wish a wanderer “Traveler, welcome home.” The ideal goal of a religious institution should not be proselytize, judge, or anything of that sort. But rather, people come to a temple for healing, for renewal, and to be welcomed by others.

These are to be designated as free places to stay the night, although donations may be made to support the functioning of the temple. If anyone wishes to be healed, priests would be trained in first aid. Books for reading from multiple religions would be shelved for those who want to study.

Essentially, it is a place of comfort, and respecting the boundaries of others.

As a side note, I no longer believe that temples should be on a sort of socialist welfare. Temples should be exempt from taxes, provided they are not in defiance of the state. But “render under Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God what is God's.” A temple should earn its keep, and give back, not to the government but to God.. Likewise, those who stay the night do not pay monetarily, but agree to work (help cook, work on the farm, etc) in exchange for a free place to stay.

Temple Society

The service is led to its system by 7 priests; there is no ranking system to avoid clerical politics. As to decision making, the priests of the four main elements vote on the temple position and in the lay have majority vote, the decision that the lay makes it passed as it is; the priests must have unanimous vote of all seven priests to do the same. The priest of light writes down the basic vote of the priests, and the priest of dark writes down the lay decision. The priest of wood attempts to reconcile two decisions into one decision, which is voted on by the seven priests to pass or fail. If there is a similar voting pattern 3 times by the priests, the priests are excised as corrupt.

That said, temple society may vary, so it is important to decide what works, Some temples may have only one priest, or none at all, while some may have the full staff. Anyone can be a priest, under the belief system of Aiken. The idea that one must be ordained by a social training is absurd, and a form of social control. No amount of indoctrination, training, or schooling can make you a more loving person. You either develop a strong heart, committed to yourself and others, or you don't. Because anyone can be a priest, anyone can marry.

It is important to remember that while there are seven priests, this temple cannot exist properly as long as a tax state exists. Just as Jesus asked to show the coin when he gave his famous “give to Caesar that which is Caesar's,” and found that the priests had it, while he himself did not, it is important to remember that priests can become tools of the state. Religion and state are intended as separate from each other. This is not to say that the religion is in political opposition to the state, but that any temple should stay out of politics entirely, neither being tools of the state nor in defiance of it, but rightly cautious of political interference. Ideally, a temple would have no property taxes, and be used to house and care for those who are without means. Likewise, state should not impose political standards of conduct on the temple, or be guilty of misrule.

When temples are forbidden, you are allowed to hold services in the home, or even outdoors. The building of the temple is not important, only the gathering of people in worship. Nor are priests nor sermons necessary for worship. The day may come when these things come to an end.

Temple Life

The temple is built so that it may double as a temple and a monastery. Anyone who meets once a week is lay, anyone who stays 5 nights a week or more is a monk or priest. The front entrance leads to the temple hall where worship is held, and then there are rooms upstairs and downstairs from the main floor. Simple objects are permitted in the rooms, such as books and writing materials. A person is permitted a computer as long as it is portable. Personal property is not the issue, but human dreams are crucial to following God of one's own will. At most extreme, any monk is allowed one book of their own possession, their own bank account (which is not used on premises, but neither is given over to monastery except under the monk's own choice) , their wallet and keys, and one object related to their own hobbies. Other books and movies are part of the library, to be rented. There should be time in each day set up for one's own hobbies, and time should be also granted on the Sabbath to visit the nearby towns. A person "should be in the world, but not of the world," meaning the monk exists in the world and should visit it, but does not need to be motivated by its desires. As much as possible, a temple should be built so it does not incur a great amount of property debts or bank debts. It should be built by its members.

Abstinence is not seen as a virtue, as it draws away from both natural life and a loving relationship with humanity. However, and "sleeping around" is discouraged. To abstain is a choice, to pursue more spiritual matters. But all humans are of the spirit of God, so rejecting people to be closer to God does not make sense. It is your choice, though.

The temple is in no way gender separated, as both are active worshipers, so rooms alternate. The rooms are set up according to bonds by families or social groups, but two-person rooms may be rented during private times, and likewise solitary rooms for need to be alone. Daily ritual includes not simply worship but daily farming, as the monastery reveres nature, as well as having to feed itself.

Temple Service

As Aiken is open ended, services really only take place as a celebration of an event. The service itself is designed with a few simple rituals to commemorate the event, then worship is open to whatever prayers or concerns people have. The idea is mainly to enjoy the festivities though, unless it is of serious import.

In a service, candles and sources of flame are largely abstained from. The soul of Aiken is like wood, the flame comes from followers on hearts. The temple is designed to draw in light without such things, and so only night services, like All Saints Day have use of flame. Fire is for community, heat, light, comfort, and forging tools. The religion of Aiken is about harmony with nature and balance and renewal, not purity or light. If it makes people feel welcome or comfortable, go with it, for fire does help with the above. But it is important to remember, religion is about connection, just as vines grow together.

Temple Schedule

Monday-Friday
6AM-7AM: Wake up/Prepare for the day
7AM-8AM: Morning Prayer
8AM: Breakfast
9AM-5PM: Chores/Volunteering/Work/Etc.
(NOON-12:30PM: Lunch Break)
6PM-7PM: Dinner
7PM-9PM: Worship*
9PM-10PM: Reading
10PM: Sleep/Private

Saturday
7AM-8AM: Wake up/Prepare for the day
8AM: Breakfast
9AM-5PM: Personal Travel/Private Time
6PM-7PM: Dinner
7PM-9PM: Worship*
9PM: Sleep/Private

Sunday
6AM-7AM: Wake up/Prepare for the day
7AM-9AM: Breakfast
9AM-NOON: Sunday Devotion (Temple is open to public)
NOON-1PM: Lunch
1PM-2PM: Worship*
2PM-5PM Community Events
5PM-6PM: Social Time
6PM-7PM: Dinner
7PM: Sleep/Private

* Worship can be divided into either book reading of holy books, scheduled, meditation, or other activities. Each person has beliefs unique to them, and different worship style. In addition, the mystics practice Aiken martial arts for the first hour of worship.

Division of Services

Each service is designed so people can attend at any day they want, since the temple is never closed. That said, there is a set schedule of the service itself. The time of the service is not precise, despite the schedule, since breakfast and lunch are after them. Still, there is a typical format to each service:

Prayers
Reading
Announcements
Offerings
Confession (This not like a Catholic confession. It is more the Episcopalian style, where you confess that you have sinned, and then are forgiven)
Semon* (Optional)
Peace
Blessing and Dismissal

Despite the format ostensibly being similar to Christian, these take place in a timeless fashion, that is, one can come at any time during the service and do these in any order. A sermon can be added, but is optional.

Division of Worshipers

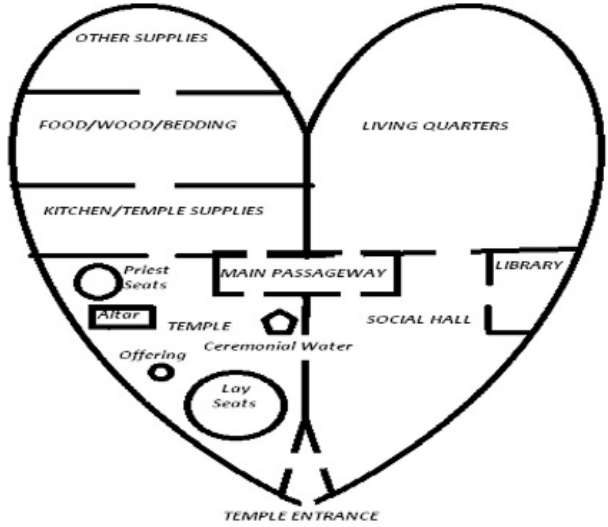
Due to the emphasis on welcoming all manner of worshipers, since it is a personal religion, devoted to loving others for their own sake, there are several types of worshipers:
Monks (Permanent/semi-permanent residents)
Visitors (Meet a few days a week, typically for services)
Priests (Permanent, guide ceremony or services, officiate weddings)
Mystics (Permanent/semi-permanent, participate in Aiken training)

Offerings

The temple balances personal worship with charity, allowing what one believes to help others. For this reason, any offerings go no greater than needed to upkeep of the temple and its farm, and the rest is offered freely back toward feeding or helping any who ask. That which is needed to support the temple, the farm, and the monks/priests, is put directly into the bank so as to have monetary security.

The rest is open plate, and thus the monks should keep no fear of being stolen, for the offering is open to any who need it. The temple for this reason does not lock its doors, or even possess locks in any but the bedrooms, for they never close their gates, having nothing more important than the lives of its disciples.

Temple Layout



This is an ideal temple. Yet this temple may not be built until either taxes no longer exist, or we live in a world that has infinite resources, where such a thing may be built without restraint.

All Saints Day/Halloween

Unlike Christianity, Aiken allows ritualized celebration of Halloween. This is the night when the Boundary between Death and Life is weakest, and the souls of the dead can be felt. The wearing of costumes is permitted for young and old, but it is not intended to scare. These are not evil spirits, simply the souls of the dead. The point of costumes then, is to recognize that all of us take many forms in this and other lives. This is a fast day in terms of food, though alcohol and a light meal is allowed. Service takes place in the morning, and the evening is left for walking the streets. Unlike in Christianity, this is the same night as Halloween, recognizing saints in the morning, then walking the streets at night.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a day of the harvest, and it is one of great celebration. This day is to show that God has power of nature, rather than lesser nature deities. A feast is held after the service consisting of anything grown during the year. The feast consists of poultry, beans, corn, and squash. The plants used at the altar are corn, beans, and any local crops.

Christmas

During Advent, a potted plant is put near the garden for each week with purple string attached (Aiken is like nature, so flame is used mainly for cooking). The third week, a mint plant is added with a pink string. Finally, a dwarf evergreen is added on Christmas Day. On the day of Christmas, there is a small feast of wild game, mixed vegetables, and wild rice. This is a time where despite the coming weather, life is filled with hope.

Easter

This is a celebration of rebirth. The idea of newness is present in this tradition, so people may use this time to set on a new path. The plants used are any plants currently in bloom in the spring. Eggs, fruit, and the like can be eaten. You can eat lamb to remember the death of Jesus on the cross, or any seasonal meat.

Conditional Holidays

As an option, Jewish holidays can be subbed out for Easter and Thanksgiving. When the time surrounding Easter is particularly harsh and oppressive, you may celebrate Passover. Unleavened bread is served with roasted lamb, eggs, and herbs. We do not replace the lamb, because temples are irrelevant to feast days. If Thanksgiving is lonely, you can celebrate Sukkot. The tabernacle does not need to be built, but rather you may sleep outdoors. You may present good, neutral, bad plants to symbolize guests.

Funeral

Aiken believes in a natural burial. Too much money is to be made from expensive coffins. A shallow trough, covered with sticks and leaves and mud, is probably sufficient. Death is the great equalizer, all that is needed is a small wooden shrine, to hold a person's name and picture, is all that is needed. Any funeral celebration may be used, but the priest reserves the right to decide the details of the ritual.

Wedding

An Aiken wedding is different in a few senses from other religions. First, it does not technically require a priest, just two people making vows with a witness. Second, if the priest does get involved, the focus is on Bonds and Boundaries (both setting up an area for the two to stand, and a hand- fasting, are likely things to happen), that the face of God can be seen in the significant other since Aiken is based on pantheism, and the emphasis on Love and the Elements. Third, it can be tailor- made for the bride and groom.

Section 3: Lessons

Founders Aren't Role Models

Most religions like to paint their founder in a good light. The founder is perfect, the founder spoke to God, the founder blah blah blah. I will do nothing of the sort.

I am flawed person, and might always be. This is a list of the hard lessons of my own life, and while some of them may be wrong for some circumstances (and in some cases, I may have learned the wrong lesson entirely), they are designed to share what I have learned. But in the process of writing it, I realized that despite heartache, rejection, loneliness, and so on I wanted to keep living. In some ways, I'm sorry I made that choice, as I lived long enough to hurt people I cared about. But this is intended as instructive material for people believing that there is nothing out there to live for. There are people who care about you, even if you might not know it. The point of life is not someone else's standards of success, it's to live, laugh, love, and care about something. You must find God, the purpose for your life and your happiness, for yourself. Not your mom, your boss, or anyone else can do it for you. I want to convince others of this, and away from the toxic over-achievement of our culture. For this is precisely what crushes people to the point of suicide, loneliness and rejection by society for failure to measure up. Realizing that you are imperfect is the point.

Reality is a Mirror

We have this notion that if other people could just accept us, that everything would be fine. But actually, the truth is, what we perceive around us is a reflection exactly of how we treat ourselves. As in, if I feel guilty about something, or uncomfortable, other people are more likely to tease me about it than if I was completely cool about it.

Stop feeling guilty about what you want. If you want to do anything, this is okay, provided you don't hurt others. Because when you hurt others, you are really hurting yourself.

Whenever someone treats you bad, ask yourself, “what am I feeling guilty about?” Treat people with kindness and their issues will fall away. All else is there for you to learn and grow from. That said, do not fall into narcissism. These other people exist too, to keep you company.

No Holy Books

There is no such thing as a holy book. Neither is there such a thing as a holy person or a holy place. These ideas are a form of idolatry. In actual fact, any book including this one, is simply inspired word. This is dangerous teaching in fact, because it encourages hero-worship and inspires concepts of infallibility, which is dangerous precisely because it inhibits dialogue and questioning of any problems encountered with the faith. By the same token, there is really no such thing as something secular. Even a commercial can teach spiritual truth. The Bible is not God's word, yet it is written by those who were made in God's image and who were inspired by God. Jesus is God's Word. So is all Life, as existing in nature. A book? No, a book is only of worth is it is used, even if its use is to be burned. Whether the Bible or Tao te Ching or even this one. The respect should be given to builders of statues, writer of books, yet the books or statues themselves are just objects.

Conversion

Aiken is designed to be an personal religion, not to be spread by the sword or the tongue. It may be only spread to close friends or family members, or if the person actually asks about the religion. The decision to become a priest is made by the individual, and nobody is damned for not joining; however, if you feel you must meet, simply gather at the nearest temple and worship there, if there is no official gathering available. If no temple will allow you to quietly gather without fear of the proselyte, meet quietly in a natural setting, or at home. Likewise, the Aiken follower should not be coerced into another religion, or made to feel damned for not joining, but coexist and learned from the religion. Aiken being personal entails that all religious beliefs are decided by the follower, not the organization they belong to.

Aiken is devoted to loving self and others, so one must learn to find religion that appeals to them, and which does not harm other people.

Hammer of Cults

The name of this lesson comes from similar writings called the Hammer of Witches. Having been in a cult by accident, the writer feels that this is at least as grave as witchcraft, for it manipulates the feelings of those who attend, trapping them and taking away their personal hopes and dreams.

Understand that God wants our devotion, our hearts and bodies, of our own free will. This is why free will was created, so that mankind could choose God themselves. Any organization that forces members, even among visitors, that forces outsiders to give up their possessions rather than leaving it up to a consideration period, that seeks to cut ties with others as a way of controlling them, and which gives nothing back to the community, is not a monastic community but a cult. Cults should be destroyed, undermined, and any members should be deprogrammed from its teachings. Failing this, one who recognizes the workings of a cult should flee, for neither salvation nor any other gain can be attained from such a place, only the loss of one’s soul to evil.

There are cults everywhere too, in the workplace, even in the home. The act of forcing your ideas down the throats of other people, without their say, is the height of malice. God wants us to have our dreams, to have families and be able to work, to give ourselves willingly to our lives, and to have our hopes. We give all we have and cut our ties only as willing devotion, not at the suggestions of others. For to give up our dreams, our hopes, and our love at the suggestion of another is tantamount to losing one’s soul. God wants workers, not puppets.

What Can We Be Sure Of?

It seems obvious to modern people that the Earth is round. We learned in science class, all sorts of things about the curvature of the Earth and seeing NASA or National Geographic pictures of satellite imagery. But it is entirely possible that such pictures are doctored. When you look into the horizon, you can see straight ahead with little or no curvature for only about 11 miles at most, but when you look in the sky you can see light years away. This is explained as because of a function or the curve, but it is true even at high altitudes, where you should be able to see over the curve, making this more like a domed barrier or firmament. This is not to say that I'm a Flat Earth type, I'm merely stating that such things are taken as given without question. Such questions should be asked.

To be perfectly honest, we cannot be sure of anything. Human beings could only be male, with all females caught in an elaborate act. A virgin would have no means of knowing this short of having sex, and even this could be something like a latex skinsuit. Likewise, children might all be produced in a vat or in vitro tube. Without being a woman, and carrying a child to term, how can you be sure? We have no way, likewise of knowing whether things exist when we leave the area, or whether our reality is in fact a holograph, or whether existence is something maintained by those existing between moments. Ultimately, to be at peace, one must be able to be at peace with the notion that reality is perhaps not what we think.

The Purpose of Existence

We go through this life vainly wondering what our purpose is. We wait for experts and gurus to set us on our path. But nobody can tell you besides you what your life is meant for.

One method which leads one to unhappiness is trying to please others. You cannot spend your life trying to please others. Reality is a mirror, so anything you do or feel is reflected back to you. Any attempt to please others will simply mirror that you are discontent, and want people to like you. Why don't you like you? Because other people don't like you. Why don't other people like you? Because you don't like you.

Second, neither make the mistake of viewing this reality mirror as a sign that all of us are figments of the self, and that the idea is to merge into Higher Being. Yes, God is One, and all of us are part of God. But God created us as individuals, to live out our own purpose. Compare humanity to coral. Each section is part of the whole, but is also distinct. Since we are both part of something greater, and separate beings, we will never be truly alone. Reach out your heart to other people, when you are sad or down. They will be able to help you.

So, if the Self is not meaning, and Other is not meaning, what is? What is the purpose of existence? I cannot find one for you. My purpose is to teach those fixated on Other about the Self, and fixated on Self about Other, so they can break both dependence and the illusion of isolation, to build a better world.

But what your purpose is, will always be up to you. Find it, and strive to do it.

Leadership is Teamwork

Many businesses have extremely wrong-headed ideas about what leadership is. They value it as an important skill, or a sign of greatness. It is neither.

A leader must be independent, because primarily to be a leader means listening to the rest of the team. A leader is simply a person who sees what needs to be done, sees nobody doing it, and asks other people to help them. A leader that can do the job themselves, but needs others to help them. A leader must be independent, they must be their own person, but also part of a team. Leadership isn't an important skill, because anyone can do it. And it's not a sign of greatness because the very skill of leadership is admitting the job is too big for just you to do.

Many leaders are stressed out about their jobs. This because they try to “run” things. Think about the high school principal though. All of their energy is spent policing bad kids. When you watch after the behavior of others, when you rule them, karmic backlash dictates other govern you. They make your life busier, more stressful, in your family life, in your marriage, they make you regret trying to oversee them. The best leaders are advisers, like a principal who sees a struggling transgender student in a religious campus as they are about to retire from stress, decides to give the student fashion advice and emotional support.

Ambition is Evil

In this life, people have dreams and aspirations. But there are two dangers with these. The first is trying to tear down or stifle the dreams of others. Obviously, such people are despicable. But there are also those who pursue their dreams, even at the cost of pushing aside their friends and loved ones. Being willing to pursue such dreams at all costs however means you have sentenced yourself to loneliness and sorrow.

The truth is, most people pursue ambitions to impress loved ones. But loved ones often won't be impressed if you throw away time with them to try to pursue a big role somewhere. The dreams you need are those you personally care about, and even those require that you respect the rights of others. It is important to respect your self, and have dreams. But before that is a sense of balance, neither giving up your dreams nor interfering with others.

True and False Faith

Religions like Christianity often mention that there will be false prophets or false gods. What exactly do they mean? Well, there's several ways to run afoul of the true God. First, to assert God does not exist, and nothing we do matters. Often times such belief systems seem popular because they advertise themselves as freedom, and paint conventional religion as too rigid. "Those traditional religions don't allow sodomy, transgender lifestyles, bestiality, polygamy, or necrophilia. They are bigoted." These systems originally present themselves as freedom, but watch out! When you pursue your desires without restraint, remember the consequences. You don't understand what I mean? Well, whenever the Jews turned away from God, they always wound up being conquered and enslaved. Remember that so-called free religions also allowed slavery, and be aware. God does allow homosexuality, polygamy, and transgender lifestyles. But, homosexuality and transgender lifestyles often weaken the populace as it does not reproduce or becomes a group of eunuchs. Polygamy creates confusion and makes inbreeding a problem. God says, "You can do all things, but not everything is good for you." The false freedom of the secular eventually leads to chains.

Islam seems to be trendy right now, and "they're modern", according to the secular world. But are they modern? In France, a little girl accused her teacher of making caricatures of Muhammad, and he was beheaded. She later admitted she made it up. And what is modern about throwing homosexuals from rooftops? Islam often hides behind the notion that just a few of the followers are violent, so the whole religion should not be judged on that. This is incorrect. The people in Islamic countries should not be judged, but the book of Islam (Quran) advocates violence. We don't judge people, we judge ideologies. And just as state Shintoism wasn't accepted, we shouldn't invite Islam into our countries. Note the distinction, I said not to invite them in, not to go into their own countries and hurt them. I believe in boundaries, largely because mine are horrible.

Aside from Islam and secularism, even religions that are peaceful have problems. Some are cults that pretend to preach peace until they take over. Some have problematic notions of salvation or the afterlife. Still others practice slavery or other forms of oppression. These are the works of false prophets. But I have not yet talked about false gods.

While there are clear false gods, like those who take manmade ideals and make them into a god (becoming so into sports that you neglect friends and family), one of the ways there can be a false god is if our notion of God himself is false. For example, "God loves everyone, and so I don't have to worry about anything." This sort of mentality breeds a licentious attitude. God does love everyone, but if you have a big orgy, expect to come down with some STDs. Will you then blame God for the consequences of your actions? Likewise, there is the opposite ideal about the nature of God, that he is some legal entity that weighs our sins and decides we didn't do this, so into Hell for us. This accuses God of being like the man who gave five, two, and one talents expecting his share to be doubled, and took from the man who earned nothing everything he had. This is not God, this is how the Pharisees saw God. But God says, "I desire ***mercy***, not sacrifice."

False teaching confuses, leads to violence, and causes fear. Real teaching gives hope, clarity, and peace of mind. We must remember that nothing can separate us from God's love, and those who teach us otherwise are trying to condemn us. But "vengeance is mine, saith the Lord," so those who condemn others are condemned. If God wanted to condemn us, he certainly could do exactly this, but his desire is that all might be saved. We must trust God, and believe in his mercy and best interests for us.

The Unseen World

This world is not what we think it is. We live day to day never seeing or noticing what goes on, and seeing only the “work hard and you will be successful” or “sacrifice and you will get to Heaven” models of being. But this isn't really how things are.

Behind the scenes, numerous parties are working to make this world what it is. On the political level, you have numerous private individuals with huge amounts of money or power. There are also organizations, like the CIA, who look after the country they protect and assert propaganda to ensure loyalty to state.

But these above are irrelevant, for their power in this world depends on the cycles of rebirth and the Afterlife, meaning when they die, they are also mortals and have to be reborn. There are spirits of all types, including angels and demons, who cause misfortune or fortune in this world, and harm/protect humans. In this matter, it should be noted, that much of what you think is “coincidence” in this world is actually a result of either people, or spirits doing behind the scenes actions.

Finally, there are creatures called Reapers, who oversee the larger portions of running existence itself. They take the dead where they need to go, and allow Life and the activity of Nature to happen. The Reapers are the “backstage crew” of reality.

Grand Theory of Death

Death is nothing to fear.

When you die, two things happen. First, the body decays and converts into natural energy. That is, it becomes the building material for other creatures to eat, so that they will in turn become strong, and produce new life.

As for the soul, it has a choice. It separates out into a star-like mass of energy that can either be converted into energy itself and be reborn as a new spirit (becoming a ghost, animal, human, god, devil, or part of the Afterlife), it can enter into the Afterlife, or it can be reincarnated. It can also remain, as a spirit, until such time it wants to pass on. This choice may be made by the soul, or it may be made by another.

In addition, the soul's main part forms a tool. That is, what we view as our main personality. This can be split off during astral projection, or at the edge of death (coma) to find a safe place to survive. This tool may be passed on to others, used for purposes on this earth. The Sword of Sorrow (referenced later), is an example.

For example, a soul that remains behind can be reincarnated as one's own relative, if both parties are willing. Death is seen as a parting, and often dismissed under “realism” as nothing more than the simple end of the mind. But death has no power over the spirit, and people can meet again if they wish it.

What is Religion?

Whenever you read a holy book, you will hear about divine inspiration, about how the founder of the religion had some sort of encounter with whatever their religion is about. Is this actually true, or did the founders just make these stories up to round up followers? Well, the simple answer is both. A religion has divine encounters because the founder believes in the encounter. Because reality is subjective, the founder sees it based on their perspective, and therefore a divine experience is the epitome of their worldview.

It is true, however, that some of these stories are massively inflated.

When the found of a religion forms their beliefs and tenants, they come from the person's worldview. A person's worldview is based upon their past, and their heritage. For example, Jesus grew up under the oppression of Roman rule and Jewish bureaucracy, Mohammed had to contend with rival religions and desired fame. This is not to say we cannot have a purpose larger than ourselves. This world is a place we all live in, some beliefs are shared, and some are personal. Some experiences are personal or shared, it is how our life connects with the rest of humanity that matters.

Life Contains Afterlife

This life has subjective elements to it. In each moment, there are parts of Heaven or Hell. You don't need to die in order to experience this. Whenever you have loss, stress, pain or sorrow this is a taste of Hell. Whenever you experience bliss, love, and peace of mind this is a taste of Heaven.

Death is when you release yourself from this world, so rather than overlapping with the world of dreams, you are fully present in this land.

Remember, your actions in this world affect this reality. Everything you do matters. If you hurt people in this life, or allow them to hurt you, your life changes accordingly.

Afterlife

Where do people go when they die? Typically, they go to hell, heaven, or reincarnation. Unlike most religions, the object is not necessarily to reach Heaven, or even be reincarnated. Instead, the object is to Master the Heart, for if this is done, it will stop mattering where you end up. The point instead is to remember, not only yourself, but souls that have come before.

One should try to remember everything truly important, for without knowledge of such things, no afterlife would be of any worth. The Afterlife is not Heaven or Hell, but a blank mass that is built by the wishes of the Heart. Further, those who care about you may be able to intercede on behalf of where your soul goes. This is what we mean by a Savior, everyone you know and love is the Body of Christ. And Jesus saves.

Viewed from the outside, remembered loved ones appear at night as bright stars to those who can see them. Viewed from the inside, death is like a dream, where anything you believe is real. What is truly important is the time spent with other people. One’s fate is decided by the balance of grace and love given to them by God through the sacrifice of Love. By faith and love, one may learn to find peace regardless of one’s destination.

About Reincarnation

Hinduism or Buddhism (I forget whether both do, or which one) hold that the point of reincarnation is that the soul is trying to grow into its ultimate self, and that Earth is a sort of “training ground” toward this aim. This is nonsense. If life is about Bonds and Boundaries, than truly nobody can tell you how to live your life, or when you've “gotten it right”. Life is what you choose to make of it, down to your name and starting environment.

The other disagreement about reincarnation is that the ultimate result is some sort of unity with the cosmos. All of us, to start with are souls. Souls are effectively joined with the cosmos to start with, but losing what made us individuals is appalling and disgusting. When you pass on, you have the option what happens. You could give your soul to dwell in another person or as part of Nature or the universe, head to Afterlife, or become part of a family as a new soul. But all of this is your choice, there is no ultimate destination, just a desire to do something.

Likewise, karma is only limited to people who remember you from a previous incarnation. This is why Boundaries are important, to avoid inadvertently treading over old wounds or repeating mistakes. It is important to remember that while karma exists, the Christian law of grace also exists. In fact, if anything, reincarnation can be said to be a reflection of God's forgiveness.

The ultimate goal of reincarnation is not to unite with God and snuff the self. It is to become at peace with the Self and become a Co-Creator with God. Alternatively, one might develop a different goal of existence. God is both Being and Essence, so we too are both individuals and part of a cosmic One. When we each realize we have something to add, a vision of Creation, this is when the world slowly becomes Heaven.

Wake up Sleeping Angel

A lot of so-called Christians think that the way into heaven is to “be a good person” or do “good things.” This is not the way of any Christianity much less Aiken, this is cheap secular morality designed to convince you to fear for your soul so you won’t rebel against working at some dead-end job and strive for something greater. While you worry about acting “good” or “polite” in a vain attempt to impress God, your greater job assigned to you to love your neighbor as yourself and to seek to lose your life for Love is being left undone. Seeking to earn your way into heaven through acts of goodness, is actually an attempt to save one’s own life, which is the antithesis of Love.

Instead, one should accept their life and themselves and so doing strive to help others from a genuine heart, because one has grown to like others. If dreams are a subset of reality, then “reality” in turn is a subset of the true reality that awaits us in the afterlife, and as co-Creators of God’s work, we are angels or demons only sleeping. Rather than being “good” strive to be true and forget what others in society demand, then when we awaken from this dream we call “life” we will find ourselves in our pure state of being.

God is One

The concept of God and Man is grossly distorted. It isn't that God is some outside being that created the universe, and we are obligated to worship him. Nor shall we live in awe of God. The opposite mistake of arrogance must also not be made, though.

Humanity is a part of the Unity of God. All of us have Divinity as part of ourselves, and the freedom to live our lives. However, what makes live meaningful is accepting help and sacrifice from other people, and being the source of help and sacrifice in others. Humans are like a flower that has multiple stalks, each is distinct and part of Diversity, but this is part of the Unity, and functions best when connected to the whole. Because of this, knowledge gained in one's life needs to have real- world testing.

God is Many

Before we make the mistake of narcissistic “All existence is Self” thinking, however, we must consider the following. Can we wish away our problems?

Can we simply say “I am the only one who exist, so all that happens to me is just a projection.” While it is true that this world is ultimately, not absolute reality, what is not true is that we are to sit on our hands dreaming of contentment, and do nothing to actually achieve it. Reality is a reflection of the Self. But we must not make the mistake of thinking that “I am the only one in this fishbowl.” All of us are are God, and we are not alone. The point is not to become fixated on the idea of union with God. Each of us is already in union with God. But we are also called to become Many from One. God calls us not to be alone, but to think of others, because each of us is diverse, and has something to add to Creation.

God is On Our Side

We have this notion that we are doing the right thing, and those other people are in the wrong. However, this is faulty. There are wrong belief systems and wrong actions, but not wrong people. All people are under the grace of God, and as such, all are those God helps.

Suppose God has a prayer, “Please God, let us be victorious in battle.” And the other side prays, “let us not be killed in combat.” Whose prayer should God answer? The truth is, in such instances, God will try to spare both sides undue death. God is on everyone's side, including our enemies.

Accepting Jesus

Christians may tell you that you need to accept Jesus in order to be saved. This may be true, or it may not be, for this life is given by God to do as you will. Regardless, it misses the point of who, and what Jesus is.

Assume for a second, that you have a girlfriend. She is not a neurotic mess, but has her head on straight. As healthy is she is, she likes something about you, and is willing to fight to make you whole as well. If you know a person/people who will fight on your behalf, who love and accept you no matter what, forget someone who died long ago. You have already met Jesus, and need only to accept this love. Be that person for someone else.

Misunderstanding Jesus

Aiken is a belief system that is basically comparative religion. It is a true American religion, for it blends ideas from many faiths. This is not to say it is some kind of charismatic movement that expects to be all things to all people. First and foremost is understanding that religion is really about you, not about other people's moral standards. That said, the basic belief set is ideas from Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Taoism. From a purpose of comparative religion, I have had the opportunity to look at several religions and political groups, and then come up with my own ideas on this. Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world. Galatians 1:8 to be contrary to this is to be a false teaching. Judaism, Buddhism, and Taoism, do not make the character of Jesus into something false, unlike some others. He is probably not the Messiah to Jews because he failed to meet their expectations, he is a bodhisattva candidate in Buddhism and an avatar in Hinduism, although not necessarily in line with their values. If Taoism does not reject the figures of other religions, so Jesus is not declared false or anything, just not necessarily relevant to them. None of these distort the actual nature of Jesus, a loving and virtuous man, who is called Son of God and died for our sins.

What does? The idea of painting Jesus. You've seen those old pictures where Jesus looks vaguely European despite being born in the Middle East. Same thing. The idea of painting Jesus as a socialist. Or a capitalist. Or pro-life. Or anything really. Jesus is, ultimately, God who was born as a human child and died as a human man, creating a bridge between ourselves and God. It isn't just the forgiveness of sins, but also the breakdown of barriers between ourselves and God. This bridge still exists, and will always do so, despite our failings.

What does this look like? It means that rather than some distant man on high promising to come again sometime, Jesus is already here. The girl at work who sticks her neck out for you. The old black man needing money. Your dearest love. Your parents. Whoever you meet, Jesus is within them. One day, you may meet Jesus in the flesh, and he'll be nothing like you imagined.

When I wrote ideas of Christianity here, the point was not for this to become a Christian religion, nor reject or corrupt Christianity. Rather, I reject apocalypses, hierarchies, predestination and election, and final damnation. These things are constructs to rule others in fear. They are not in line with Christ who died on the cross to free us from sin. Similarly, these ideas should be rejection whether you are a Christian, a Muslim, or a Buddhist. You shouldn't accept other people as better than you (hierarchy), nor that you are better than others (election), nor wait in fear of final punishment or worry for sins (damnation/apocalypse). Jesus is already here, has already died for your sins, and you already live in his kingdom. I see no reason why it matters if you want to also believe other things.

Quit Posing

In this life, there will be people who tell you that you need to be a certain way to be accepted, or do certain things. However, this is the opposite of actual belonging. Trying to change yourself to suit other people runs into two problems, first, you lose all sense of yourself and your happiness, and actually distance yourself from loved ones, and second you can never please everyone.

This is not to say that you can be complacent. It is important to set goals and work toward them, but generally much of the neurosis in the world stems from not being able to draw the line about what genuinely needs changing, and what is an endearing quality.

What makes you vulnerable, is also what makes you connect with other people.

Learning to Trust

Trust is a difficult thing in this world. Friends, and even family, will often let you down. And when a worthy person does come along, you ask “what's the catch? What do you need from me?”

Learning to trust is not the same as being gullible. You do not need to suspend all disbelief, or give up the ability to analyze situations logically.

Trust is closer to being able to open up emotionally to another person, to share feelings that are kept locked away from people you haven't met. It is this lesson that must be learned if one is to connect with other people. Of course, if you don't wanna trust other people, don't trust other people. It might make you alone, however.

Rules of Dating

Other people like to set rules for dating like “Girls only like guys that are clean-shaven” or “don't date someone out of your league.” The only hard and fast rule is is that simply being “nice” isn't okay. There are plenty of people who act “nice”, that is, until being rejected when they show their true colors. Being nice is common decency, you should also have something to offer, and take decent care of yourself. Never demand something of her that you wouldn't of yourself (such as great hygiene when yours is horrible).

There are women who like clean-shaven men, who like rugged men, who like bold men, who like shy men, who like masculine men, who like feminine men, there are women who like women, and there are men who like men. There is a common myth that there is one ideal, but this is a lie. What those like about you initially, unless they ask you to change it, is probably why they like you, and changing that to fit a common ideal of love is a mistake.

Love is not enough. There are other things necessary in a relationship. Devotion, compatibility, acceptance and understanding of how their personal culture differs from yours. Poor compatibility does not mean a relationship is sunk by default. It does however mean they have issues to get past. The only true rule of dating is that it's hard work.

You may have parents who stand in the way, a full-time job eating your time, and other such problems. You do not go in with the notion “love conquers all” and quit job, family, etc that opposes you. You have to listen, make difficult decisions, and try to make things work. And, it takes two.

Betrothed to God

As a condition of our birth, we are all the Bride of Christ. The Church shares one body, meaning all people are in a love relationship with God. When we die, we are to be married, and to spend our lives along with God. The world we live in is one of waiting. Human relationships are generally screwed up because they are based on a flawed system. And yet, it is important to remember that everyone we meet is our lover, even those who seem to be our enemies.

This is important to remember as part of Shintoism and Buddhism is that everything, even rocks, trees, and the air we breathe is part of God.

No Coincidences

The average person sees random events forming into a pattern and dismisses it as "coincidence." But I tell you, there is no such thing.

Everything, the movie or book you pick up to view, your choices in jobs, even what you eat is symbolic. Doing these things teaches you about various things, including about yourself and the world around you.

This is not to say there are no choices. But everything you experience, is in some way part of a larger plan to guide your growth as a human being.

Why Destiny is Crap

Just as there are no coincidences, there is no such thing as fate. When we talk of fate or destiny, what we actually mean are two main things.

First, we mean one's purpose. For instance, human destiny is to be born, reproduce, and ultimately die. This is how humans are, but it is not the same as fate. Some people aren't born, dying in the process of childbirth, some never meet anyone and do not reproduce, and at least one person was supposed to have not died. Purpose is not the same thing as fate.

Second, destiny refers to the sum total of choices a person makes. Consider what was said in the section about there being no coincidences, about all experiences being part of a larger plan. That plan doesn't exist if you don't move towards it. That is, no matter how passionately I may want to be a basketball player, if I don't practice dribbling and shooting these "coincidences" won't start happening. You simply won't move towards the path of being one. For an example, if I use scissors and put them in a drawer on my desk, have wrapping paper from Christmas, buy some books and meet someone who likes the subject of books I bought, and I want to give her a present, this is all destiny. But it is not a random event, but rather the result of all those other actions.

Be Your Best, Not The Best

The world is far too ambition driven. While you try to please others, to move towards "success," you have to compete with everyone else, put yourself in competition with other people, and push everyone equal or below you out of the way in your desire to be the best, to be promoted to the top. But this religion isn't about success. It's not about the 700 Club, that God has supposedly blessed with financial success. It's not about failure either. There are tips about herbal medicine, and natural living, but you are by no means condemned to the forest to live on the fringes.

Some people may like owning a business, some may not. Some may like being an artist, some may not. Or a writer, or whatever. The point is, in the rush to success, we have advertised one business or another over others, so people desperate for jobs trample each other to be "the best." But there is always someone better. The important thing is to be your best, to do the work in life that you want to do, even if you're the only one doing it. To be happy with what you do, and with yourself. From there, to be your best, you need to be a good friend to those who care for you. I know this. Because trying to be "the best" to please others ruined my life. I am a broken man because of it, at the time of this writing. I don't want to same to happen to you. So don't confuse this with fundamentalist Christianity, or modern day work perfectionism. Compete with nobody, and simply find what you wanna do, and do it.

Twin Swords

The world insists upon two things in order for a person to thrive. The first is Dedication. Without effort to everyday tasks, people do not grow and improve. However, a belief set that too heavily bases itself on this leads people to feel that they are worthless. That they haven't worked hard enough, or aren't enough.

The second is Acceptance. Without feeling worthy of the job given, you will work and work yet never really belong. Those without being able to love themselves will not easily be loved by others. However, this can be taken to the point where one becomes complacent and allows issues to pile up. Reality is the wall all about us, closing in. We have two swords to protect us from what life can do to us. These swords are best used in unison.

Happiness with Unhappiness

Apparently, in modern society, it's a crime to be unhappy. Surrounded by books, video games, fancy cars, computers, expensive jewelry, and various convenient devices, if one has everything, and is still unhappy, there must be something wrong. In fact, on a large scale, people are unhappy because such things just create a greater need for work, and less actual security. Even relationships today are based more on material worth than actual love. And yet, forsaking all possessions won't make you happy either, for as you wonder when your next meal is coming from you have no peace of mind.

Neither is dependence a particularly romantic trait. We seek and seek happiness, but perhaps this is the problem. Whether we have nothing or everything, if we still want more, this means we aren't truly happy.

When nothing is going for you, jobs won't hire, love won't approach, and things don't seem to be getting better, what keeps you going? It is when you are happy with being unhappy. Realize that God is there for you, even though times are tough, and be able to endure any hardship.

Thankful During Suffering

It is tempting during adversity to think of your life as a tragedy or a failure. But it is important to remember that one exists, and to be thankful for one's life. Everything else may as well be an illusion. Aiken fully believes in the idea of a holographic universe, and also believes one's feelings have a way of influencing perspective. That is, sometimes you may endure hardships. But the key is to remember to take it in stride and remember there are positives to anything. Doing this will be harder than it sounds, though.

Bonds and Boundaries

All human relationships consist of Bonds and Boundaries. Love, Nature, and Family/Friends are all Bonds, things in the outside world we can connect to and which give Meaning to life. But just as having Bonds makes life worth living, Boundaries are what is needed to keep from being used, and to keep from being a jerk to others. Boundaries is a sense of knowing the line between your own and another's rights, and how to keep from either getting trampled upon. For instance, doing a job, and not knowing what you do not have to do, is a lack of Boundaries. The reason it is largely free, is because understanding Boundaries is what allows one to live their lives in freedom.

Boundaries of Faith

Aiken is not about imposing rules on human behavior, so these are Boundaries. Boundaries being necessary to keep freedoms one has, these are set in place as customs to live by, not rules to stifle.

What you bring to the temple may be from outside, what you do for the world may be outside/inside, but the resources you use should be inside.

This is to prevent the temple from relying on the government, or being assimilated. Any power, should be created by the temple (solar, wind, whatever), as should any food, water, or clothes.

Oppress no others

Religions emphasizing freedom have a tendency of drawing up people who want a rival religion to oppose it, for the purpose of authority over others. The reason this religion was founded was in response to controlling people.

Do no harm to others

Do not kill, except to hunt. Do not rape, under any cause.

Do not steal, unless you need to eat, and try to return what you steal.

Do not begrudge the choices of others

There are some who will live in the temple for two days a week, some who desire to live there for most of the week, and some who visit and never return. The choices of beliefs and faiths is equally important as attendance, Aiken has no set view on what others believe, so long as they want to be there. Self-belief and self-will, in aid to loved ones, is Aiken belief.

Distinguish yourself from others

Conformity is the law of the outside world, but it does not need to your law. Those who believe should find some way to make themselves distinct from such. The human is given free will, not to be obligated to others, but in order that one can help others they care about. Wear a necklace if you wish to remind yourself (see Customs) of such, but true distinction comes from your heart.

Aiken can be part of other religions, but other religions aren't part of Aiken

The idea here is that Aiken shouldn't be able to be corrupted. If you have ideas from Aiken, but you're a follower of Buddhism, you're a Buddhist with Aiken ideas. But trying to say you're Aiken with Buddhist ideas is like trying to redefine Aiken according to Buddhism. Though I suppose I've done this some with Christianity, I feel Aiken shouldn't be a conversionary thing but more of counterculture to the idea of orthodoxy. As such, there is no "true" Aiken, for Aiken is about religious homebrewing.

Heart Sense

The Heart Sense is the ultimate technique of the Aiken religion. Using the idea that God is the embodiment of love, and that all people have spirits from Her, the technique uses the love of others to sense people.
The heart sense under basic training might identify a person by their impression. Advanced training would allow one to sense the general location or another person, but this of course is rather limited, as it is said that this only works if the two also care vaguely for each other. Master training allows one to read emotions, though this is dangerous as it is subject to one's own interpretation of others.

Aiken

The Aiken is a form is form of mystic arts utilizing the mudras (hand motions) in specific patterns. Although it can be used for self defense, the real point is closer to tai chi. The Fire style moves in a circular pattern, the Water style moves in a wavelike pattern, the Earth style thrusts in a cross-like pattern, the Wood style moves in a triangular pattern, and Wind style moves generally in any pattern in a random flowing weave. The feet are not used offensively, but instead, they make quick lunges to dodge attacks. The style also practices fast mixing of several techniques to throw a rival off guard. This style is not particularly offensive, but emphasizes parrying and countering. The aim is not to learn to defend oneself, but (hopefully) only to be used in defense of others.

Faith or Works?

Did the faith of Aiken come from the Catholic faith or Protestantism? Believe it or not, it came from neither. It was formed by melding some of the Taoist faith with Episcopalian Christianity. Anyway, the belief system concerning which saves one is that both, or rather neither alone will save one. We are not saved by faith or works but by love, though love with faith or works is acceptable. One might dedicate one's life to the temple. Or one might spend one's life caring for family and other people. One might even spend one's life only caring about finding romantic love.

One may not sell indulgences, for no matter how holy one is, good faith or good works may not be given. This is because when they are done, good or bad emotions are grafted upon the soul, and the soul may not be given away.

Just as faith and works may commit the soul to afterlife through Love, these may also unbind the chains of a possession. Knowing this, one need never have any fear of what lies beyond death. Preoccupation with death keeps one from living as one wants, and from living in service to others if one so desires. In the end, fear of afterlife makes one a slave. It is only by living in love and being willing to die for it, that one is set free.

Final Lesson

Home is where the heart is. Whenever someone tries to tell you that they are family, whether they birthed you or raised you, if they do not love you, if they abuse, mistreat, or manipulate you, and call this “love,” they are not your family.

Likewise, anyone who accepts you, raises you properly, and indeed loves you without anything to gain is your family, regardless of blood ties.

This is the meaning of the statement that a man must leave their family to follow God. Only by indeed finding out what a family truly is like can one know God, and this cannot be found by staying with one’s birth parents. This does not mean one must hate one’s family, but like the temple encourages weekly outings, and accepts the person who wants to leave to explore options, the family that loves must be able to let go, or risk being controlling. Charity begins at home, but it doesn’t have to end there. Love your family, but love the family of those you meet as well.

Part 2: Utopia

Politeness

Too much of this culture is an emphasis on saving face. Being made to say “thank you” or “sorry” when you don't mean it, is a good example.
You should in fact say sorry, when you are sorry. And thank people when you are thankful.
But there are too many people who try to buy your devotion with unwanted gifts, and when they don't hear “thanks” for their manipulative actions, get angry. These people are not good people, and you should ignore them.

“Equal Rights”

The Great Lie of our our era is that things like “equal rights” have to be handed out. All people, black, white, gay, straight, etc. are born with the same rights. Free will, the right to choose one's mate, and so on. If we are human, we by default should be able to do such things without asking or making mandates over other people. It is only those who feel the need to stifle the rights of others that this world is in its sorry state.
What is actually being said, then, is that other people want special privileges, so as to make things “equal.” Granting the right of gays to marry is something that is a given without specific prohibition. Even though a family logically is set up for mating, the actual purpose of a union is that two people are joined.
If we really wanted equal rights, all that would be sufficient to do would be to abolish any laws that say otherwise, not write new ones. Government cannot give us rights.

Self-Destruction

Humankind is caught in a dangerous trap of self-destruction. This is what is behind problems such as poverty, war, inflation, and even suicide. The problem lies in human desires directed against other humans, for instance, competing to make money so other people will be jobless. These selfish drives rather than making life easier actually make life harder, because the more people “succeed” in this world, the more others have to lose.

Look at cities or countries which tried to pander to human greed by raising income. Each of these places actually became that much harder to life because with the rise in income, comes the rise in living costs.

The Solution

The cause of all problems in human relationships is poor boundaries. The reason Aiken is a religion of Bonds and Boundaries is because in order to have true abiding love, you must have healthy boundaries. You would not invite thugs into your house, just as you don't want a relationship where a partner is all take and no give. On the other hand, healthy boundaries do not mean rigid boundaries. If you shut all others out of your life, you succeed only in becoming angry and alone. Ideally instead, people must be able to assert themselves, but in such a way that rather than push people away, they grow closer. This is key to repairing the world.

The world is a microcosm. What you accomplish in a small town can directly improve or decrease everywhere outside. Be a person who is close to others without feeling used.

Who is John Galt?

One of the problems of organized religion is people conflating being religious with being unselfish. Whenever societies tried models of government approaching unselfishness, they were always disastrous and always oppressive. You may ask why this is the case, so allow me to explain. While charity is fine, it's a choice. You, the person with means decide to set aside some of your earned money to something you believe in. Some donate to disaster relief, others to medical funds.

On the other hand, telling any person that they “need” to give away their money to the less fortunate is typically fighting words. First, the word “fortunate” implies that it was purely luck of the draw. And sometimes that is the case, a person gets fired from their career and can't seem to find work elsewhere. But a person can keep trying and make their own luck, and more importantly, there are those who genuinely made poor decisions, so rewarding their crappy actions is not likely to happen. So, ultimately, socialism must be enforced at gunpoint by big government or by roving gangs of thugs. This is typically why despite the very altruistic sound of this, typically ends up with a massive bloodbath, people refusing to have their bank accounts emptied for random strangers, people refusing to open their homes to worthless deadbeats to take, and so on. Jesus said love your enemies, and forgive those who hate you. Jesus also said to love your neighbor as yourself.

If you love yourself, if you truly respect yourself, you do not allow other people to abuse you. You set limits. After those limits are set, however, those with faith are willing to give back to others. The difference, though, is that it's your choice. One day, maybe all of us will want to give to charities, and the world will be a place where none of us have to suffer. But telling people that they must cooperate with mandatory sharing is unethical, and will only worsen the way the world is. Ideally, those your heart goes out to, you choose to give to. You can make a choice to help others, but it should always be your choice, and limited by your means.

While it is important to remember that government is ordained by God, neither good nor evil on its own, it is like the workers of the field in one of Jesus's parables. The Master gives the field to them to run, but expects to collect the harvest. When he finds that those who he has given the task run the vineyard poorly, he will do likewise to them. Government should strive to produce good crops, so as to not have to answer to the Master.

In Spirit & In Truth

There are all manner of temples, sacred mountains, and so on. It is true that ley lines form around such places, but in actual fact, worship is up to you, not just the time and place but even if you want to do it.

If you feel stifled by churches and holy buildings, don't go. Find something else meaningful to you, and go to it. This might be your family, or time with a loved one, or any number of things.

This is what is meant by worshiping in “spirit and in truth.”

Governing Least

Perhaps one day, people will be tired of oppressors, and ask only for government that governs them least. Or perhaps one day, governments will learn the lesson of history, that governments have always fallen which failed to respect certain things. A government fails that tries to destroy family. Family is a key system of maintaining stability, it helps people decide to work hard and remain good citizens. The socialist systems like to undermine families with various schemes, and this works in the short term, providing citizens easily programmed by television and the public "education" system, but in the long term, such citizens are autistic, psychotic, and easy to disappoint and will kill people for criticizing them. No system wants this in the long term. It is also foolish to take the people's women or their children. For as people are brainwashed, each generation must become dimmer than the one before.

Second, a government should not take what people need to live on. They should only tax what is sustainable, and should never tax businesses. While I would prefer a government run with no income taxes at all, but a tithe is okay so long as it is taken from salary and does not require people to save their earnings. High taxes ironically mean they eventually go bankrupt, for as the people become poor, and businesses no longer have enough to exist, sooner or later government runs out of people's money. Lastly, life and property of the citizens must be preserved, as if people are taxed or robbed of their property, they may revolt.

The best government of all is no government at all, where people are tired of governing others. But human nature is flawed, and this will not last before violent thugs take over. And so, the best realistic government is a a town hall, where people volunteer to lead, and are not given any wages for doing so. Such people do not collect from the citizens, they act as one of them. Taxes affect them, and they do not give them lightly.

The second best government is a small town with a mayor, where there are few taxes except for fees for the services. Government is small and localized, and each town is run differently. If you don't like it, move to another town.

The third best government is one like ancient China based on merit, when the people are qualified. Better still, if such governments rule from afar and have no impact on daily life. Such governments fail to understand others, but also fail to worry them.

The worst governments micromanage, having a global government run even the smallest citizen. Such governments may appear to work for a time, but sooner or later, they go too far or simply run short of resources.

The very worst government tries to convince people that they are free, who uses lies and tricks to make people think they are happy, so they cannot even think to revolt. Such governments take people away if they even ask a question. Their days are numbered.

Part 3: The Sage

Definition of a Sage

A Sage is a person who has knowledge and some mastery, not simply of the Yin and Yang from the Tao, but also has the added layer of the Tomoe. The Tomoe is the symbol on the page before. It represents the harmonization is the inner nature of Yin and Yang, with the outside world. It would be a God-dependent man learning to help themselves, or a self-sufficient man learning to trust God and other humans.

More importantly though, a Sage is a human who has wisdom and love, not simply for those within their own social group, but for all of humanity and the strength of will to attempt to lead it, not into ruin as more tyrants do, but to save it from itself. Sages often live lonely lives, and seldom marry, for the world needs them more. Still, a Sage values love, so if the world improves, like Confucius's hunt for a better state brought him an office position at his success, so too may a better world bring a Sage a place to be loved.

Rejecting the Future

The Sage is content with the present. They know the past, they know themselves, but they don't worry about prophecies of doom and gloom. To beginning with, there are no prophecies worth knowing beyond the prophecy of the coming of Jesus. And there are no reliable prophecies since then. I do not trust Revelation, nor the prophecies of Nostradamus, nor climate change hype (which btw has been wrong for over fifty years), nor even predictions I make on my own life. In order to become a Sage, I believe one must let go of worry for the future, and let events flow into place as a result of one's actions. This does not mean taking no responsibilities though, but rather letting go of a sense of fatalism. This world has good and evil, but trust in God and the natural world. If there is something that is happening in the present that you do not like, prevent it now.

The Tomoe

Learning to access the Tomoe rather than simple Tao requires more than simple emotional strength, or discipline. It requires that one be receptive to the callings of nature, and have trust. The easiest way to train this is perhaps to learn surfing or body-boarding, to feel the flow of the waves, the soil behind the feet, and the air above. The body must be calm and patient for whatever comes, and do nothing until the appropriate action presents itself. Through this method one can unlock the powers of the Tomoe, and be a Sage, even if requires practice to use for longer than a few seconds.

Likewise, faith in God or mankind is the same. It requires sensitivity in fellow humans, patience, and a knowledge of when to act. This is how to become a better person, to serve yourself and also serve others.

Sage vs the Bureaucrat

The bureaucrat is a person who attempts to help others while sitting behind a desk, oblivious to the actual problem, or worse they are a person who “helps” by meddling in things which do not even concern them. Even if a person does ask for help their brand of help is actually more like interference, asking the person to do this and that, to fill out this form, all to ultimately rule that perhaps that person does not deserve their help. Too many jobs have this point of view, too many other mediums have this stance, and the world becomes filled with outcasts, rejected time after time. The Sage on the other hand does not behave is the bureaucrat, or if the Sage does, he or she is no Sage. The proper Sage is as if one of the other people waiting in such a place who does as a good, yet normal person would do to help, perhaps moving out of line to facilitate things, or in the case of hiring giving another a chance at job instead of the bureaucrat. The Sage above all is the epitome not of the superhuman, but of what it should truly mean to be human, the law of acceptance.

Helping from Home

The section before talked about a bureaucrat helping from behind a desk. Unfortunately, many such bureaucrats , far from contentedly running welfare and social security and many other big government programs, have decided to foist crackpot systems of illegal immigration on the public. Why is it okay to be charitable from home, but not welcome them to your country? And how is this different from running things at a distance from behind a desk? Because it's not really about the distance, so much as the distant attitude. Once the bureaucrat invites said people in, it's someone else's problem. They don't have to deal with fallout.

Imagine telling people that we have to get drunks and prostitutes off the street, so everyone must invite drunks and prostitutes into their home. Wouldn't be simpler just to go give such people money?

A bureaucrat tells themselves they are doing good, all the while supporting more government oversight, more rules and regulations, and more widespread poverty as a result of trying to import third-world people into the first world. And what has it gotten anybody? Rather than solving their problems, it has burdened our country with third-world problems. The poor immigrants are still poor immigrants and they understand even less about holding jobs here than in their native country, plus now they collect our welfare while our own people struggle under higher taxes. You want to fix the world? Don't do it by committee. Don't use government funding.

Donate to charities. Or better yet, if you're feeling committed, you can personally go over to help. What isn't cool is insisting other people watch after visitors they may or may not want, who may or may not contribute anything to the society. If you want to help give (money, help, food, Heifer donations), don't take (immigrants, people's choices, and people's rights).

Previous Sages

Strictly speaking, anyone who has attempted or succeeded in the past to put humanity's best interests first, instead of cowing to bribes or threats has been a Sage. Nonetheless, various people, if any of the rumors of spiritual powers concerning them were true, were Sages in the other sense of the word. Such people as Jesus, Buddha, and Elijah had transcendent powers such as walking on water, which cannot normally be done through simple faith. Only by allowing outside forces like God or Nature act upon one, in addition to balance of one's own actions, can such miracles be done.

The Chain of Harm

A Sage should seek to understand the nature of evil in this world, if one is to improve things rather than making them worse. When humans are stressed due to the cares and worries of life, they abuse others. Now there are arbitrary laws, such as karma or other such things, but these blame the person for their failings and do not address the real problem. If a person is abused, to relieve themselves of stress, they abuse others. Who in turn abuse others, who in turn abuse others, who in turn abuse others. If a cat chased by dogs were to eat all the rats in existence, the world would get overrun by insects, and filth would destroy everyone. A Sage breaks this cycle, by refusing to abuse others. Only by treating others well, can this world stop its spiral toward destruction.

The Sage State

Like a trance, being a Sage is usually a transient thing, because it is an altered state of being. The Sage State is similar to dividing a pie into two equal pieces, before deciding how to slice the third. Your self is in balance (Yin/Yang) and then is further divided between self and other.

No human is completely self-sufficient, and “no man is an island,” so even though the Tao often exists independently of the Tomoe, there is typically a small segment which is devoted to others. This can be as small as a fraction of the Tao, to up to half the “pie”, as much as the combined total of Yin and Yang. More than that, the human body cannot actually stand and is thus unable to use.

Likewise, too little of this third renders the Tomoe (and the Sage State) unable to form. Too much or even the needed amount, has a side effect of arrogance, a belief that the heavens are aligned with one’s fate, and the occasional instance of delusions or hallucinations. In order to combat this tendency it must be remembered that a delusion is a delusion because it centers around the self, and the Sage, despite possibly heightened physical or spiritual gifts, is still human. That said, the actual meaning of the Sage State is a sort of Bond. The Sage State works best when one is in love, and that Love pervades not simply as a normal love does, but as a way of helping the entire world.

The Sage and the Reaper

Unlike the bureaucrat, which is definitely at odds which that which the Sage stands for, the Reaper and the Sage are really two sides of the same coin. The Sage is a paragon of Life, having an abundance of natural energy flowing through them. The Reaper is a paragon of Death, being able to exist not as a simple soul, sent to some afterlife somewhere, but a being with purpose. The Reaper cares for the world of the living by causing things to grow, guiding weather, aiding childbirth, and claiming the dead when their time comes.

It is a mistake to think that a Reaper is killing those it claims. As one lives in the Earth, the soul can last, but the body it is attached to begins to degrade, it is like a reaper of crops separating wheat from chaff, that a Reaper takes the soul from the body, so it can claim a new body, or head to worlds beyond.

The Sage and the Reaper both have tools of the Heart in which they can perform tasks. These tools are not seen by the eye, but are rather expressions of purpose. As Reapers have tasks for anything concerning the natural world, there are tools for these tasks as well.

The Sage is in the world helping it as a fellow actor, a Reaper is like the behind-the-scenes crew for existence.

Part 4: Prayers

What Is Prayer?

If the Mune Shinri truly accepts all forms of worship (including atheism), what can be said about prayers? Simply that prayer is a type of energy that flows throughout the world, and inside the self. This is vague, but look at it this way. In forests, you expect it to rain, or the plants die. The plants effectively release energy to “pray” for rain. Human beings, as well, can use energy outside themselves or energy from within to pray for things.

Prayer can consist or words, physical motions, or desires. The prayers below are written as verbal, but they express the intent behind what you wish. You could just as easily have a prayer granted that was simply a powerful desire. Finally, prayers are not inherently good. The origin of a prayer is the Unity of existence, meaning the sum of all living things and hoping and wishing for something. Unity of All Things, is the fundamental definition of what God is.

Section l: Common Prayers

Protect Self

I have so much left to live for, Lord. As my life is still ahead of my, protect my life, protect my health, and protect my happiness. Finally, when my soul shifts to its proper place, let my life have been fulfilled, so let me truthfully say that this was the fate I deserved.

Protect Others

This person is dear to me, God. Let _____ live their life out with glory, love, and joy. Let this person find happiness. Finally, if it is your will, let us be together when death comes to claim us. Send this person not in to anguish, but let my love protect them.

Marriage

(No priest is needed. Humans have the natural ability to join in matrimony.)

I, (Name), being a woman/man, in the eyes of God pledge to love, cherish, and protect my beloved, from any harm that life gives to us.
And I, (Name), being a man/woman, in the eyes of God pledge to raise our children and cherish my beloved, for all of our days.
As God has given us hearts to love, and offer love in return, let it so be that we are married.

(There is also an official marriage ceremony. See the page on marriage and funerals for more info)

Prayer after Death

Merciful God, this person has passed to the other world. Strengthen the love in their heart, and let them feel worthy of Heaven.
(Likewise, there is an official burial ceremony)

Protect from Evil

Defend us, Merciful God, from ghouls and ghosts, from demons and evil influence, from dark prayers and religions based upon harming others. Let not our minds, our hearts, or our will by controlled. Let any sort of evil of physical or spiritual nature be repelled from us, let us be protected from our own failings of sin, and let us find our afterlife freed from the chains of guilt.

Protect from Physical Harm

Twelve sages linked their will to build this, the builder shed some spirit into the vessel, and it was made whole. Let this now remain intact for the duration of natural existence, nor let this crack, break, or fall into harm. Likewise, protect your people, God, and let not their essences escape the vessel prematurely.

Endure Elements

Cold wind, pouring rain, frozen snow, and scorching heat. By the guidance of the Heart, let none of this bother us. Let our heart glow with a flame that is neither hot nor cold, yet keeps us alive and warm in winter or cold in winter. Let this divine flame glow within us be unlike any mortal flame, let this become a symbol of our abiding love for you, and as our hearts burn brighter and brighter, we shall have ever less to fear from sleet and snow, from wind and rain, from heat and humidity.

Atonement

As guilt weighs upon the soul, it slowly destroy the body. It slowly destroys the feeling of a worthy existence and a decent life, until the person feels doomed. I intercede on behalf of this person, I have seen some good along with these failings. I ask, lead this person back into a joyous and worthy life, and forgive this person even when they cannot forgive themselves. Make them whole again, in Love's name.

Prayer for Mercy

I have done terrible things for which I am ashamed. There is nobody to intercede on my account, or to speak of good works which I have performed. I cannot even forgive myself. I ask of you, not knowing whether you will hear my pleas, yet Merciful God please come to my aid.

Prayer to Nullify Curses

As I wander throughout the land, I may perhaps scrape my knee on rocks or branches; however, under your protection Merciful God, let no name or insult ever hurt me in heart, mind, body, or spirit. Let not any evil prayer cling to my essence.

Prayer for Strength

The journey before me requires great strength of body and character, Lord of All. I will be tested as never before, and called upon to perform great feats for you. Give me this strength, so that I may succeed in my quest.

Prayer for Speed

By my Heart, let me run the race of faith. Give me feet as swift as the currents of air and water, let me outrun the beasts of the field. Let me work in faith and swift speed to spread the good news through cities and countries which I pass on my long journey.

Prayer of Knowledge

Lord God, Solomon asked you for eyes to see through illusion and deception, for wisdom to understand truth and banish lies. Let this gift not die with him, yet spread to the peoples of the earth. I have been caught in a bind, Lord, help me find the wisdom to determine the truth, and find the proper course of action.

Public Speaking

As Moses was slow of speech, Lord God, so am I. Give me the proper words to lead, to motivate, and to aid. Let me speak and be heard, and let those who are resistant, if they do not accept my message, at least accept it as equally valid to their own.

Prayer to Bring Rain

The fields are dry, Merciful God. Please allow them to be soaked with your great love, and let them bloom in due harvest. Cry on their behalf, and they shall become moist indeed.

Prayer of Snow

As our hearts have become cold with loneliness Eternal God, let this day be said aside to spend time with friends and family. Let us play in the snow, and not worry about mundane chores. Let it snow, Lord.

Prayer of Fire

The fires of passion burn brightly Eternal God, let the fervor of home and hearth rage in us, consuming sorrow and disaffection. Let this passion burn in us, and let us bind with others in beautiful harmony.

Prayer of Air

The winds of courage glow within us Eternal God, freeing us from our busy lives into Chaos. Let this essence mold around us, let the breath of air fill our lungs and our hearts, and let us breath a new life. Let the air come to our aid, Lord.

Prayer of Healing

Merciful God, this person is need of healing. Their arm is broken, their leg hurts, or they have a problem with their insides. Return their tissues to normal, and speed your healing, so that when your new dawn comes, they may be greatly improved in health.

Prayer of Emotional Healing

Merciful God, this person is need of healing. Their heart is broken, their spirit is shattered, and they no longer have the will to go on. Let them find that there are those who believe in their worth as a person, even if they have currently have hard times. Let them learn to feel good about themselves again.

Prayer to Relieve Tragedy

Merciful God, we have come out of the cataclysm with our lives and we thank you for it. We ask you, if it is your will, let this unfortunate turn of events give us strength of character, and let our life be eventually restored to its former glory.

Prayer of Hope

The box beckons claiming to be Hope. Yet when it opens all evils are unleashed upon the world, and instead is Despair. What is the power of this Box of Pandora? The ability to know the future, for with this skill we are powerless to change it. The Hope which lies still inside the box is the power to seal our anticipation of the future from actual fact. That is, our greatest Hope lies in the fact that life is chaotic and uncertain. Eternal God, let there be hope in our life.

Prayer of Chaos

Eternal God, you know the danger of too much planning in our lives. We live out each day the same as the last, never looking forward to anything. Free up our day to seeming disaster, so that we can take a new look at our lives and discover what is truly important to us. May Chaos find a plan for all of us.

Prayer for Children

Let the children come to you. Let those just born, those who are starting to walk on their feet, and those who are almost teenagers seek you and be answered in their prayers. Let them find faith in you.

Prayer for Animals

The animal hungers for its master, Eternal God. Let it find a life filled with happiness, and simple concerns. Let it be understood be humans in its needs, and let every desire of its heart be filled.

Prayer of Family

The home dwelling is filled with supporting people. Let each of their lives run smoothly, Merciful God, and let the bond they share within the household strengthen them as people.

Prayer for Peace

Lord God, every day one human kills or hurts another, it is saddens us. If it is your will, let humans be able to go one more day without making war on each other.

Prayer for Love Disputes

As there are wars outside the house, there also are battles being fought inside, even by the most loving couples. Help these lovers find solutions to their arguments which is acceptable to all sides.

Prayer of Love

The heart is not something which can be controlled. Rather, Eternal and Loving God, let us ask for the greatest gift of all, to by our own efforts, find someone who naturally and genuinely loves us, and strengthen this bond. Help the probability so that the two of us may meet again and share a life, if this is the person chosen to be with me.

Prayer to Calm

This person has become upset by the waves and wind of life, Merciful God. Help them to find strength within the turmoil and find peace within their heart. Let them find rest in their weary life, so that tomorrow can be another day.

Soulmate Prayer

Unite this (person, object) with its truest mate, Lord God. Grant that as we ourselves seek after own soulmates and work toward happiness, that (Name, this object) may also find their mate. Allow me to unite the two speedily and efficiently. Let the Red Thread bind these two in Heaven.

(NOTE: This is typically more to find lost objects than true love, which is instead a prayer of love. Besides, a soulmate is not necessarily the most loved one, and can often serve more the role of a friend or sister than a lover.)

Prayer of House Blessing

Cleanse the soul of this house, Lord God, so that it may be lived in wipe out any evil spirits infecting the area, which may cause the house to deteriorate, and replace these with guardian spirits, so that this house may be a place of warmth and light, of love and family.

Prayer of Forest Blessing

Cleanse the soul of these woods, Lord God, so that plants and animals may settle here pecefully, watch over this land and keep it safe, and fill it with fertility, so that all manner of good things may spring forward from its soil.

Prayer of Nature

The forests cry out to you, Lord. Hear their prayer. Deliver them, please, from being chopped down without first showing apology to them, and help make sure that new trees are created in their place. Let not the forests rot away, Merciful God.

Prayer of God

Creator, Savior, and Holy Spirit, you are in Heaven and Earth, you even reside in the shadows of our own hearts. Let your name be holy, and let your will be done wherever it is asked, be it Earth as Heaven. Lord provide us with what we truly need, and what is needed to survive. Forgive us our own sins as we forgive others, and grant us courage when temptation comes. And deliver us from the hands of evil. Let you rule in power, love, and glory.

Gogyou Prayer of Blessing

The Fire of passion cries out to you, Lord.
The Waters of longing cry out to you, Lord.
The Earth of devotion pleads to you, Lord.
The Wood of compassion beseeches you, Lord.
The Wind of courage addresses you, Lord.
Hear our prayer, and protect and bless this area with your Eternal Love. Let this place bring true holiness to the area around it, and let this be a monument for ages to come.

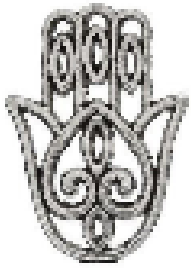
Kuji-In (Prayer of Exorcism)

Rin, pyou, tou, sha, kai, jin, retsu, sai, zen.

(Say each of these words in succession while making a symbol against evil to defend yourself against malevolent spirits.)

The Hand of God (Hamsa)

This symbol is called a Hamsa. If the cross is a sacred symbol to Christianity, this is a sacred symbol to Aiken. It represents that we are by guided by the Hand of God, and that nothing is coincidence. Traditionally, it also stood for protection and fertility.



Christian Purification

In the name of Jesus Christ, I ask that all unwanted spirits which oppose God come out of him/her. My name is (*Name*). I ask this, not on my own authority, but on behalf of Jesus, who healed the sick, raised the dead, and banished demonic possession. He did this not to exorcise authority over others, but to comfort the souls of the possessed. As Mary Magdalene suffered under the influence of several demons, that other possessed often were cast out of their homes by the community, I ask that your soul find rest.
I do not command you in the name of Mary or saints, or any such thing. You are a person possessed of a spirit that is not the Spirit of the Lord. I ask that this spirit be cleansed by this *water and/or salt* and that the real spirit of this person return to them. Purify the negative influences of the outside world and their inner desires, and let them see themselves as God truly sees them. Set them free from this influence.

(Toss some water and some salt in the general area said to be influenced by evil. You may add some personal words to connect with that person. The practice of purification is different from exorcism, as it tries to resolve the underlying cause of possession in the first place, which is usually from an emotional or psychological cause)

In the name of the Creator, Savior, and Holy Spirit. *Amen*.

New Believer's Creed

I believe in God who created everything there is (visible and invisible), who forms the light and creates darkness, who bring prosperity and create disaster, who does all these things. I believe in God, timeless and immortal. It is not sensible to ask who created God, because God has always been, before there was time or events, before creation should have been possible to any other explanation. I believe God appointed us to be co-creators and stewards of this world. I believe in God who comes not only to save the Jews or Christians, or even good people, but who sent himself as Savior to suffer for our transgressions, to be pierced for our sake, and to be raised up just as Moses raised the serpent. I believe in God, who is not merely an impersonal faceless being, but who we have always known, but been unable to name or put a face to. I believe that when I die, I shall finally see God face to face.

I believe in Jesus, God's incarnation, who with the Creator existed before our worlds. Who wrestled with Jacob, who was present at Sodom and Gomorrah, who was seen as Lady Wisdom and the Word of God. I believe in Jesus, begotten not made, of one substance with the Creator. With the Creator and the Spirit, all things were made. I believe in Jesus who was born from the virgin birth through his mortal mother Mary, Jesus who fulfilled the law, Jesus who entered the East Gate as the Messiah, Jesus who was called Son of God, and Jesus who was King of the Jews. I believe in Jesus who was crucified for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. I believe Jesus suffered, died, was buried, and rose again to provide us grace and forgiveness of sins, and to live as a human so that forevermore God Is With Us. I believe that Jesus's death built the third Temple that Ezekiel foretold. And I believe that the East Gate is now closed, for there will be no more need for Messiah. Our sins are atoned for, even those who killed Jesus or denied him. Even the worst of us. I believe he rose from the dead, and appeared in forms not recognized by the disciples. I believe he continued to visit the disciples as much as they needed, until they were ready to preach the Gospel. And I believe that Jesus can appear to us too, in forms we may not recognize as Jesus. As women, the poor, even those who appear to hate the Gospel but who need it.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Logos, the Tao, the *Ruach ha Kodesh*, the Giver of Life, who is one with the Creator and Savior, and who was spoken of by prophets and sages. I renounce notions that Mary is Mother of God, perpetually a virgin, or any such nonsense related to her. I renounce beliefs that she can intercede for sins, or that she is particularly blessed among women, for God chose the parents of Jesus from among righteous sinners. I renounce idolatry of saints, holy buildings, holy writings, or the idea that people are particularly holy. Only God is holy. I renounce Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as it is too similar to the Baal/Ishtar/Tammuz family trinity, choosing instead to say God is Creator, Savior, and Spirit but one God. And I renounce the idea of a Second Coming, for Jesus came again at his resurrection, and he is with us always.

And I renounce all statements that say Jesus couldn't be the Messiah because he wasn't a ruling king, didn't rebuild the Temple, or didn't free the Jews from oppression. God's purpose for the Messiah was to rebuild the Temple in the image Ezekiel saw of it, a spiritual Temple that had no veil, no separation of men and women, no distinction between Jew and Gentile, free or slave; in order to build this Temple, Herod's building needed to be destroyed. The Book of Samuel explained that God doesn't need kings, or temples built by human hands. And the Book of Daniel describes a kingdom that will last forever. This kingdom is already built, but the world seems evil because it is in denial by the sinful world.

I believe in one baptism for remission of sins, that Christ died for all sins, even those who live and die without ever knowing them, or who have committed great evil to repent for. I acknowledge the world to come, the resurrection of the dead, and the church as the Body of Christ. *Amen*.

Part 5: Sayings

Love may wither, but the flowers of its field bloom again.

Gender is an illusion. The man dies, his soul enters a chrysalis and becomes a beautiful young girl. A woman dies, her soul enters a cocoon, and becomes a strong young boy.

All religion, all philosophy, does not provide meaning. It is but the framework for an empty house. An empty house is a prison, but if there is someone to hold you, that house becomes... a home.

Know that nothing is to be expected. If you expect something to happen, it will not happen. If you intend for something to happen, it might not happen. If you desire something to happen, it will happen provided there is no other interference. Remember that others also have desires.

A soul of wind (indecisiveness) creates problems for others. If you have a soul of wind, stay out of any decisions that involve the well-being of others and confine decisions to your needs.

Self-centered actions are not always a vice. In some cases, decisions you make concerning yourself will then help others. The difference is knowing if what you want might be wanted by others.

Beware the temptation to appear older. In this life, youth is a fleeting gift, and to squander it by faking age makes it fly by with even greater haste.

If you plant one tree, this tree may in the future become the Tree of Life. Take good care of it.

To find the essence of nature go to its source. Water is at the mouth of a river, fire is in the sun, earth comes from the depths, and air is all around us. To find love is to be at the source, for Love is the source of all things.

All temples are the same, they are built for worship. All hearts are the same, they are made to be filled with love. But just as the temple is sometimes empty or in bad shape, so too is the heart sometimes broken by pain and rejection.

Show others complete honesty, and ultimately, there will be nothing to hide from them. Even in the coldest night, the fires of your heart will keep you warm.

Having firsthand experience is not a sign of hypocrisy. One must be inside the belly of the fiend to know of its true stench.

A petty attitude toward others breeds forth a petty life.

Never be afraid of a job corrupting you (except politics or legal work, you can be afraid of that), instead value any job for its experience in terms of life. Even prostitution has some knowledge to learn.

Give all things up, climb mountains, cross deserts, and swim streams for love. When you have found it, you shall become yourself truly.

When love is rejected, monsters are born.

When a ruler is corrupt, the people are entitled to revolt; similarly, when God is corrupted you are entitled to get mad. The answer is not to renounce God, but rather to follow God's rule of Love with or without His help. For God helps those that help themselves.

Beware meddling with the affairs of others until you understand your own faults. This is hypocrisy.

Religion is a voluntary thing. A forced belief is not religion, it is indoctrination.

Children should be taught nothing but to know for themselves what they want and how to work towards it, and to care about others enough not hurt them. Other than this, they should enjoy life. To taint a child's mind is evil, regardless of what they are taught.

Beliefs can be delusions. It is more important what you can do with your faith.

All people fear darkness. They fear the dark because they fear death and the unknown. They fear death because death is parting, and the unknown is the uncertainty of the future. But death and life are one, and when you die, a plant will grow near your gravestone. In deepest darkness, shines the light.

Part 6: Tales

These tales are a mix of Jewish/Christian myths with some Shinto tales mixed in. In some cases, I even decided to blend to two sources, making new tales with the essential message of the original. There are also a few tales that are just personal myths.

The Dawn of Creation

In the beginning, only God and Void existed. The next moment, God found the will through the use of the mysterious Tao to bring all things into Being. He looked out on the universe, and felt a great loneliness, a great Void. At the time, the Universe was but empty essence without being, and was only the size of a grain of sand. God molded this essence outward, as if rolling dough or spinning a web until the universe had spread out to quite a massive size. Through the act of expanding, the universe's law of Tao appointed planets and stars in its natural course, with planets to orbit the stars, and more massive planets to orbit less massive ones. The planets themselves began to bear fruit with whatever life they were capable of sustaining. Waters filled in valleys and caverns of planets, and gases filled in the heavens. In some planets, these gases were made of forms other than water, such as methane or hydrogen. Still, each planet served the purpose appointed it. Then God went to sleep and dreamed of living things. And that has been God's dream all of this time.

Story of God

God wasn't always as He is now. Before there were angels and heavenly hosts, earthly elementals, and of course the living beings, God existed alone. The universe was formless Void, so She wandered alone for hundreds, for thousands of years. But at the start, God had no concept of what it means to be God. Then God discovered that there were three aspects of himself Like God, humans can create new life, by combining two aspects to create a third.

Yet still, the universe was formless, and although they tried their best to understand what they had just done, this practice did not apply to the creation of objects. Left to themselves, they began to use their hands, their hearts, and their minds. Having no needle or thread, She repeated the motions of weaving, making a tight ball. When planets were created, He practiced the art of gardening on a massive scale. They learned skills of creation and in turn gave being to all aspects of the living world. Whenever they wished to learn a new skill, they would become human to practice it, and return after the human's life was over. God loved these humans, and many of the other beings She created, so one day He decided to send himself as Savior to be among them. Having no other desire, She found a woman suitable for bearing this child. As God had learned of Her loneliness only by observing humans, He decided that She wanted a true human experience, not simply the wearing of human skin. So God was born as a human. Unfortunately, once achieving human form, this Savior began to see that human relationships had become flawed. So this Savior gave his life to attempt to repair them.

Dividing Day and Night

When the Earth was yet formed, the Sun and the Moon were united, and the Earth was covered with a gray desolate existence which lacked both joy and sorrow. They never slept, they never ate, and they could neither live nor die. So God, seeing that the Yin and Yang were intertwined too tightly, arranged to have them separate. But as they broke apart completely, God saw that this was just as unnatural. So She arranged to have them joined yet distinct, making them complements to each other. He then set them to tend to the day and night, shifting guards as one went dormant. But because they had shared time together, occasionally they felt the desire to join again, and when this coupling happened there would be what is called an eclipse.

The Dawn of Spirits

Next God decided She was in need of help in order to make repairs to this creation. It was created, but like most things in the span of infinity, the blink of an eye is all is takes to crumble into nothingness. So using His spirit, She fashioned beings of pure energy to maintain the natural world. These beings did not so much control nature, as they made sure it was in good repair, and that the laws of birth, death, and growth. These myriad spirits spread throughout Heaven and Earth. In Heaven, these spirits came to be known as angels, which spirits charged with preserving the Earth were called elementals. The first angels were named the embodiment of cosmic Male and Female. From their union, came all other things.

The Dawn of Nature

God then created Nature itself. The plants and animals of various planets bloomed and gave seed, filling the Earth with a fine bounty of sentient beings. These beings could both act as helpers to mankind or to feed humans if they were desperate.

In the center, God planted His tree from which the roots of all other trees were brought forth. He named this tree, “the Tree of Life” and hid it underground away from the sight of humans. Eating from this tree would grant immortality, but at the cost of a species becoming extinct.

Out of the primal Being, God created water to fill the Earth, and gave life being within the water. She created volcanoes to blow hot gases throughout the air, and using fire molded dry land. God set moist clouds in the atmosphere, and set stars in the sky outside it. Finally, God created layers in the Heavens and the Earth, and gave a source of heat inside the Earth. Finally, after making a fire within the Earth, God made a fire outside it, which He called a sun. This sun was what powered everything from that day on, for without it even plants would not grow.

The Dawn of Humanity

Yet God was still alone in the universe. She inserted His essence into clay vessels, breathing Her breath into them. As God wanted both Her sexual natures to manifest in humanity, two molds were made. But the vessels were dry, and quite soft. So God heated His kiln and hardened the clay then filled it with water. She then planted a small seed (a soul) into each. The seed burst, and vines covered the inside of the jug. The seed's roots gave birth to other plants, which covered the inside of the jug, these later became internal organs. The water inside the jug became discolored and a muddy reddish color from mixing with the clay. Gradually though, it was soaked into the vines, making them into blood vessels. This is why we have blood. As the jug tried to move, it twisted and shook until parts collapsed in shards. The vines hardened in places to form thick roots, which are now known as bones and muscles.

Other creatures elsewhere where created in similar ways with minor variations: some had no bones, some were without blood, still others seemed unable to move. These became the animals and plants of Earth. God created life in various stages in other planets, though some of it was rather simple.

Division of Tongues

There once was a man without fault in his speech, who merely needed to ask for something be it the throne of a kingdom, a lover, or any object, and it was his. Gradually, though he found that things didn't matter, and although he could secure a lover for a time, he had nobody who truly loved him for himself. Furthermore, since everyone admired him, he never had time to himself, even though he asked. So this man asked for advice from God. God said, "Cut your tongue into pieces." The man fearing the price of this request would leave him mute, did as instructed, and instead he found that he could speak a tongue that was strange to the rest of the world. But it was not good that he was lonely, so the man made one more request, that there were others like himself. So God allowed others to see what he had done, and each person divided their tongue in their own way. This is why there is not one but several tongues in the world, and why the tongue itself is split down the middle. The man upon finding that only part of the population spoke his language, found someone who valued him among these people and was married.

The Destiny of Humans

God gave an order to mankind, in order to make their lives full and not bleak. She said, "Create!" They told stories, built monuments, and even conceived of the nature of God Himself as part of their worship of God. They began to perfect elaborate means of worship, bringing into being rituals for anything from rain to preventing volcano eruptions, even to heal wounds.

Men and women lived in happiness, without oppression at this time, for they served God in the truest sense. There was no sin in their hearts, for they had not as yet done anything to separate them from God or their kindred.

The Fall of Humans

Unfortunately, all things crumble in time. Humanity became devoid of ambition and spirituality without even knowing it. They claimed they had both, but their ambitions had become no grander than self-centered career goals, and their spirituality had misunderstood the purpose of religion entirely, binding them in a moral code. Even mankind's essential elements of the Tao were in the order of opposition (see Gogyou Traits). They even denied the female nature of God, saying that God was only male. They used this as an excuse to give males and females unequal placement in the universe, and even marked sex incorrectly as a sin rather than an act of procreation.

The boredom of life led to a form of madness, and humans began to hurt each other to obtain their selfish desires. They ate animals not because of necessity but for fun. When evil acts were done, humanity gained knowledge of the difference between good and evil, and no longer designated them as part of a larger whole, the Tao. In their avarice to consume all things, they even sought underground after the Tree of Life, but God fearing that possessing the Tree would render them incapable of leaving their sin behind, further hid it beyond the realm of Earth. God appointed the spirit of storms, Susanoo to guard it in flame.

The Sages

Luckily, God had prepared a series of saviors to break the cycle of guilt and guide humanity back to its roots. But humanity would not listen to any of these, be they Buddha, Lao Tzu, or any other.

The Savior

And so, God sent himself as Savior to set people straight. Humanity was informed of such a thing as grace. We are meant to understand our faults, yet live as freely as the animals. But humans forgot this lesson, and spread various teachings, causing great confusion as to what teachings were real and which were false. Some said Jesus was fully human, others fully divine, still others that he was born a human and because divine. They worshiped Jesus instead of obeying his teachings. Or they worshiped Mary who was a mere human. Or they set up a bunch of theology about the Trinity, which is not the point at all. Jesus died for our sins on the cross, thus we have grace. Jesus will come again. Jesus existed before being born from Mary. Jesus was called the Son of God and became human from a virgin birth. Jesus raised from the dead to show us that death has no power over us. And Jesus by being human, bridged the gap between God and man. Everything else is not relevant.

The Red Thread

One day, God looked down from Heaven and saw that although lovers made it to Heaven when they died, those who survived them were confused, and sometimes ended up overcome with sadness and despair, taking their own lives. These people who allowed sadness or despair to consume them ended up trapped in the hell of their own grief. God, was troubled by this, since he had made this abode for the spirits and the dead, so he prayed for intervention from the Tao. God, having made the world by weaving it from essence, joined the lovers together with a red thread. It was an easy color to spot, and the thread being strong enough to guide the lost lover to Heaven, this plan worked. It is said whenever two lovers are united in their hearts, a red thread binds them together, and the red thread will lead one who loves to Heaven.

Origin of Dreams

God saw that humans were losing touch with Him, so a portal was opened to the world of the afterlife. This portal allowed humanity to experience the future, the past, Heaven, and Hell. It allowed humans to create reality around them and regain touch with what they really believed in. The power to see glimpses of the future was also key to understanding the omniscience of God, for it was through dreams that such things as déjà vu came into being. The dream would run a cycle of a possible future, as it had been lived by another incarnation of the same human, which if repeated or changed, would be "remembered" by the person dreaming at a time when this future came near to pass.

Light & Darkness of Humans

After gaining knowledge of Good and Evil, the soul became Balanced. As such, it was unable to do Good or Evil, and through inaction, the world began to stagnate. God, fearing what She had created would fall to nothing, divided the human and all other living creatures into light and shadow, making them leave behind darkness wherever they went, and allowing them to be seen in a mirror. This divided self created a Light and Dark Conscience, allowing the person to make decisions.

Neither one was evil, for one made decisions based upon responsibility , while the other made decisions based upon the feelings of others. It was only when an imbalance existed between these two consciences, in which one was disregarded or labeled “evil” that true evil or sin could exist, through an error of reasoning. For instance, a man choosing only to study when deciding between this and going to a festival with friends, would eventually let their friends down.

The Sword of Sorrow

The Sword of Sorrow was a creation long before human memory. It represented the purity of human compassion, and the ability to feel sadness from the loss of another.

The sword itself was made and carved entirely from bone, representing death as a part of the very fiber of humanity. It did not cut like a normal sword, but instead sliced through the dead spirits surrounding others. It had the power to bring the dearly departed second life, or to put the restless dead to their afterlife.

The Sword is part of the prophecy of the world’s end, for it will be used to harvest souls from both good and evil, so that mankind may be dealt with compassion. Were it not so, those souls would be swallowed up when the Earth ceases to be.

The Sage's Heart

The Sage held the Sword of Sorrow in his heart, waiting for the one to claim it. He said, "I would give this to my beloved."

A dying woman came forth. "You are not my beloved, yet I feel sorrow for you." With that he touched her with the sword's hilt and Death went out of her. She walked away happy.

A seductress came. He said, "You are not my beloved either, for if one comes to seduce the Sage with promises of false love or power, the world is forfeit." He touched her with the sword's blade, and she was put to death.

Finally, the woman most dear to the Sage came. He opened his heart to her, and gave her the Sword.

The Eternal Lover

The Sage who found his lover also found a connection to her. He was reborn again and again in different forms, destined to be near her. Sometimes they were siblings and could not bed together, sometimes they were separated by a distance, and he used his Heart Sense to find her. Sometimes, he was the female and she was the male, and sometimes they were the same sex. But whatever the restriction, they were soulmates and found a way to be with each other, even if only as friends.

The Author's Tale

I studied Christianity and Taoism, and other world religions before writing this book. I always had a great deal of interest in nature, religion, and martial arts, and searched for a way to incorporate them into the same whole. But I was lonely, and after several failed loves, I began to have a waking nightmare:

The Cold House

This nightmare was of a house surrounded by darkness and snow. The outside of the house gives off the impression that it is abandoned, and I feel sorrow when I think that it reveals my own fate, that I will live and die alone, and go on to this torment when I die.

Recently, I have taken steps to prevent this fortune from coming to pass, for I wish to find my own soulmate and care for her, as she may change this destiny.

The Cold House is around all of us. Too consumed by our troubles to reach out, to trust one another, we seek to heat our own spaces. But this is a drain on things. Like the house which is heated by trusting that heat rises, we have to know that we have people there who want to care for us.

The End of the World

None know the time or means of the world's end. And it is possible that a true end does not exist, only the appearance of one. But this is a possible way things will end. The world of spirit and the world of forms exist together, the forms being a reflection of the higher symbols. Just as Plato believed in a cave where those venturing out might be completely startled by the ultimate reality outside what is normally seen, these things properly in balance, share the world with each other. The body and spirit are one, and constantly in a relationship with each other.

If there is an end, the end will come when form and spirit are no longer one. This will look like religions that care more about whether their holy book is touched the wrong way and whether their women are dressed according to their arbitrary rules than true faith and piety. This will look like people who hurt or kill others for their beliefs, no longer accepting an afterlife, but believing that killing a person will end their impact in the lives of others. This will look like big governments ignoring humanity in favor of rigid rules, and this will look like the rise of unelected mega- governments. Religion has no power over the state, and state has no power over religion, but when form and spirit are divorced, the state will see religion as a threat to its authority. When people know they cannot really die, they have no more fear.

We should fear nothing of such things. Our world will one day pass away and such things as money or food or governments or even temples will no longer matter. If reality is cyclic, it may restart. If it is towards a purpose, we will be in a world that is slightly better. The reason not to fear government is that the more they hurt and oppress, the more likely they are to violate the mandate of heaven. Just as when you hurt others you hurt yourself, so too is it for those who lead. They can govern better by not ruling over others. Remember, all you really need to fear is your own fear, since your fears create whatever end you see in the world. When you no longer have any fear, this world will end, because you no longer need it.

Part 7: Natural Life

Section l: Finding of Food

Please note: this is not a complete list.

Cat-Tail

Parts: Rootstocks, new shoots, pollen spikes
Uses: Vegetable, bread, soup, jelly.
Jelly can be extracted by straining off the juice from near the roots, the bread starch comes from grating and boiling the rootstocks and straining away the starch. In addition, the pollen may be made into bread flour, and by peeling off the outer layer of the stem, the whitish part proves good vegetable matter.

White Cedar

Parts: bark chips, young shoots

Uses: tea, soup.
The bark chips may be made into a tea, which seems to be foul tasting, but apparently works against forms of rheumatism. The early shoots may be made into a soup.

Hemlock

Parts: inner bark
Uses: bread
Mainly the western species is used for bread.

Fir/Spruce

Parts: inner bark
Uses: emergency food
This inner bark is stripped from either species and used as food. I heard of this in Russian History I believe.

Pine

Parts: inner bark, seeds
Uses: bread, nuts
The inner bark is peeled and dried, and ground into flour. The seed are roasted to remove their sap, and after which, they are eaten as nuts.

Ostrich Fern

Parts: Fronds (before unrolling)
Uses: Asparagus substitute
Care should be taken, as sometimes Poison Hemlock resembles during certain stages of its life.

Lily

Parts: shoots, roots
Uses: Asparagus substitute, vegetable, drink
The roots can be boiled in diet drinks and are nutritious. The shoots can be used as a basic vegetable. However, they grow in a limited enough supply that harvesting may affect reproduction chances.

Wild Rose

Parts: Petals
Uses: Salad, relish, jelly
Pretty self explanatory. The rose is nice enough as salad greens, but also contains sweetness which may be extracted to make jellies.

Wild Onion/Leek/Chives

Parts: stem, shoots, usually bulb, some flowers
Uses: seasoning, soups, general cooking
Unlike the lily above, the wild onion has no problem with being harvested, as the supply is decent. Also, nearly the whole plant can be used with the except of the wild onion bulb (only for the reason the it is too small and rather tough. The onion is rather versatile, it can even turn semi-sweet after long cooking. Unfortunately, this humble plant may need boiling to remove pungent flavor

Day-Lily

Parts: roots, flowers, bulbs
Uses: soup, cooking, root vegetable
The roots of the day-lily are like tubers and taste halfway between corn and salsify. The bulbs may be dried or pickled in salt. The ovaries of the flower should be removed if the flower is to be cooked.

Birch

Parts: nuts
Uses: nuts, bread
The nuts may be ground into bread meal or eaten plain.

Hemp

Parts: seeds
Uses: eaten, cakes
The hemp seeds may be eaten or fried as cakes. Although the entire plant gets a bad rap due to drug use, the drug mainly comes from the resin in the leaves. Besides which, as was written on a box of Hemp Plus cereal, only one gender of the plant produces the toxin.

Kudzu

Parts: roots
Uses: bread, edible starch
Although the roots are quite useful, due to the sheer size of the plant, gathering is a hassle. The kudzu root may be cut into pieces and cleaned (probably peel outer layer), then dried to be eaten as a starch or ground as a crude flour

Pokeweed

Parts: young shoots, berries (with caution)
Uses: greens, sometimes berries
The pokeweed is both poisonous and edible, depending upon its treatment. The shoots are edible, until they turn purple, at which point they become toxic. The berries have the jury out and are not recommended, but supposedly, the berries may eaten be used for pies, so long as the seed pit is extracted intact. The seed pit itself is poisonous. The plant can be eaten mainly by boiling with many changes of water.

Milkweed

Parts: new shoots, flowers, leaves
Uses: asparagus, sugar, gum
The shoots may be cooked as asparagus, while the flowers release a fine brown sugar when boiled. The leaves may be broken to release a milky juice, which upon hardening may be used as gum

Mallow

Parts: root, other
Uses: sticky juice, soup
The root is cooked to release the juice. The rest of the plant may be used in a soup and the root is the main sweet part.

Seaweed/Lichen Types

Irish Moss	(Most seaweed is edible)	
Dulse	Iceland Moss	Tree Lungwort
Laver	Red Seaweed	Reindeer Moss
Edible Kelp	Black Seaweed	Rock Tripe

Nut Types

Pine	Acorn
Walnut	Hemp
Almond	Pecan
Hickory	Chestnut
Peanut	Cowlily (Seeds)

Berry Types

Fig	Peach
Ground Juniper	Pomegranate
Mulberry	Juneberry
Gooseberry	Paw Paw
Currant	Cherry
Strawberry	Cranberry
Raspberry	Blueberry
Blackberry	Huckleberry
Grape	Elderberry
Plum	Cloudberry
Persimmon	May-Apple

Section 2: Finding a Home

Life in the Forest

You need to observe proper clothing particularly in an open forest, though sometimes a large grove of trees will block incoming weather to a fair extent. Also, one should avoid sleeping around tall grass without some sort of ground cover as insects and ticks might be a problem.

Mankind has made arbitrary laws on where you can and can't live, and has decided that many places are the “property” of another. Human beings do not own land, they rent it until they die. Still, it is necessary to be kind to other humans you share this earth with, so make arrangements for life with them. Perhaps the day will come when people can build land anywhere without disturbing others, but part of the condition of life is that were are not alone.

Life in the Mountains

The weather dress is even worse on a mountain, and you should probably wear extra layers. You should also see if you can build a house, even using dirt and vines would be better than nothing. Also, it is important to have flint and steel, or some other means of fire (if matches, make sure they are waterproof) as in extreme cases, you may need to boil snow to get water. A body heat technique would be useful as well. Due to being cut off from most towns, increased knowledge of herbs and wild foods is important.

Traditionally, the mountains have been the dwelling place for sages, but with “modern” civilization and its worldly and irrational fears, some mountains are now publicly monitored, if not off-limits.

Life in a Cave

You may trade some of the cold weather to live inside in a cave, but the trade is increased closeness to potentially dangerous animals as roommates, including spiders, snakes, rats, and bears. This can be acceptable if the animals are cleared out, or perhaps lured with food. Still, you also need to protect against mold and damp weather. Remember that all life has upkeep to some tenant.

Avoiding Credit

You should, whenever possible, try to pay with what you have. Credit is not only not particularly natural, it is a form of slavery, which subjects you to monthly payments possibly with no hope of escape. Ideally, as people stop using credit, this system of debt will collapse.

Life in Town

Not everyone chooses to live alone. Plenty of people choose to live in conventional society, because the alternatives above are lonely. This is okay. But remember, one's government is seldom one's friend. There is a story about a wild pig, who forages for roots and mushrooms. But then a farmer feeds him, and he gradually trusts the farmer more and more, until at last, the pig can no longer forage for itself. Then the farmer gives him to the slaughter. It is not always this bad, but one must be vigilant.

It is important to know skills, because skills keep you independent. Learn how to farm, how to use a weapon, how to hunt, and how to build simple shelters. For you do not know if the day will come when your government will come for you, because of your race, political beliefs, religion, your possessions, or even the clothing you wear, you will need to be armed. For you do not know if you will suddenly be priced out of a home, and need to figure out how to hunt and build shelter. For you do not know if one day, the farms which raise your food will fail through corruption and mismanagement.

Work jobs with others, pay taxes if living in town, and don't be a protestor. As much as possible, people should not be violent types, provided society stays civil. Yet never lose what you need to be independent.

Luxuries

It is tempting to spend your money on the latest things, the newest phone, the shiniest car, the coolest device. But cool devices may have means of keeping tabs on people. Shiny and impressive things have a way of causing jealousy and violent theft, and desirable things often come with monthly fees. On the opposite end of the spectrum is big government trying to tax people on air, and telling others they don't deserve what they earned. In between this is you and me, those who own things but try not to let them own you. Buy things that contribute to the security of your house, and keep your luxuries as luxuries, rare expenses for fun.

Section 3: Healing

Making Medicine

There are two distinct medicines which can be made from plants. The former is called a tonic, and the latter is called a poultice. A tonic is essentially a tea, with other substances such as honey or oil added. Depending upon how it
is made, and what it is used for, a tonic may be used internally or externally (a hair tonic is used externally as a shampoo, and is made by adding vegetable oils to the teal base) The second is used for simple cuts and bruises, and to leach away irritation or pain. This is called a poultice, and is used externally. To make a poultice requires the herb cooked in water with oatmeal. The oatmeal paste absorbs all the essential oils, and nutrients from cooking the plant, and the resulting
mix is pressed to the skin using cheesecloth, keeping it there for a few days.

Basic Herbal Medicine

Dandelion	Diaretic, kidney and liver disorders
Onion	Disinfectant
Tea	Anticoagulant, astringent
Myrrh	Insect repellant, antiseptic, astringent
Peach	General sickness
Oregano	Indigestion, headaches, swelling
Fennel	Menstrual cramps, gas, and bloating
Slippery Elm	Wounds, coughs, and digestion
Thyme	Menstrual cramps
Aloe	General healing (purgative if digested), wounds
Poplar	Aspirin substitute
Basil	General stomach, cold, flu, fever, possibly a stimulant
Turmeric	Wounds, food poisoning, digestive problems, heart disease, liver, possibly cancer reduction
Rosemary	Astringent, expectorant
Cinnamon	Astringent, stimulant, antiseptic, anti-vomiting, relieves gas, helps diabetes
Tomato	Antioxidant
Parsley	Suppressed menstruation, allergies, fever, blood pressure, heart congestion
Ginger	Diarrhea, Nausea
Garlic	Disinfectant, General immunity

Awakening Chi

The art of faith healing has nothing to do with prayer. Prayers are simply words without strong emotions tied to them. Instead, one should understand that these emotions can take form, as spiritual energy. Spiritual energy or *chi* exists in all people, and can be awakened by meditation or during tai chi exercises. The key to healing in this way is strong intent. Healing in this way is learning to control the flow of chi in the body, and directing it to a specific area on the body of the self or another. This energy is the same carried out in the elements, and can be used to empower prayers, but here it is spread by touch and currents of energy.

In addition to simple areas of touch, there are also pressure points, lines and points where energy can be activated or deactivated, for best effect.

Finally, certain organs have a dominant element attached to them which governs their attributes. The same can be said about disease. Understanding how the elements work in relation to each other, and the organs, is key to faith healing.

Types of Healing

Of course, you can simply pray to have someone healed, and in fact this is usually more effective, since you do not need to know intimately how the body works. Aside from that, chi-based healing is a more direct approach.

There is a third type of healing, which is not usually mentioned, due to its great risk. This would be sacrificial healing. It can either be done with a prayer or by using spiritual energy, but it amounts to ask God, "Please, give me his cancer, pain, etc." Few are willing to go ahead with this, for obvious reasons. And usually this doesn't work, because such things, as I say, are very much about intent.

Healing the World

The same aura energy that awakens chi helps shape our reality, our good and our evil. The question is, what reality do we want? I have heard many idealists talk about "building a better world." While it is tempting to think of life in those terms, a better analogy would be to be "healing the world." I grew up in the 1980s, when video games and internet and computers were young. I lived in a small town where life was mostly quaint and peaceful. As it turns out though, things were happening below the surface that were not as cool. Big government/corporations, political correctness, and to say nothing of the constant poverty that always lurks below the surface.

We always have grandiose plans for the Earth, but maybe that's us never being satisfied, and we wouldn't like what we turn this world into. Probably the better model for this world is to heal it. There's an saying, "Let no one say, and say to your shame, that all was beautiful until you came," things as they were in your childhood are probably the ideal, the only difference is to make things real. To have that small town or cool city or however stuff was like then, but do something about the below the surface falsehood, the dreams that were frauds, and sadness in the world to make things like the image you saw behind the screen (a Deltora Quest reference).